skyrocketed in recent years. In fact, according to a study by Families USA, from 2000 to 2007, premiums increased by 86.6 percent.

Let me say that again. Over an 8-year period, premiums in my home State of Washington increased by 86.6 percent. But over that same period of time, wages in my State only grew by 16 percent.

Health care premiums are taking a bigger and bigger chunk out of families' paychecks. Health insurance premiums rose over five times faster than median earnings, and that problem is not going away.

For a lot of our average middle-class families who are struggling to make mortgage payments or to send their kids to college today, this is a situation that cannot continue. They can't afford it. If we don't have meaningful health care reform, it is a trend that is going to continue indefinitely.

This reform can't come a moment too soon. Two weeks ago, Patricia's—who I just talked about—insurance company, which is the largest private insurance company in my home State, announced another dramatic increase in premium. They told Patricia, and a lot of other families in my State, that starting on August 1, this company is going to raise premiums for 135,000 enrollees by an average of 17 percent more—17 percent more from what I just told you.

A front-page story in the Seattle Times, the day after that hike was announced, quoted Gail Petersen, who lives in north Seattle, who says that news means her premiums are going to rise by $300. She said:

I would love to see insurance companies have a little competition.

So would Patricia Jackson. In fact, Patricia recently contacted my office again to let me know that, starting on August 1, her new premiums will be over $1,400 a month. That is unaffordable. It is unsustainable for Patricia, for America's families, for our businesses, and for America's future economic strength.

Health care reform isn't just for the uninsured, it is for people such as Patricia and Gail and the millions of others who have health insurance right now, who have played by the rules, but whose paychecks and futures are being gouged by a system that lacks accountability, lacks competition, and lacks reason.

Unfortunately, we are hearing from some of our friends on the other side who want to prevent meaningful, comprehensive reform from ever moving forward.

Just as unfortunate are their motives. We heard a Member of our Senate say he wants to protect the status quo. He said:

If we are able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo, it will break him.

Mr. President, that type of posturing is playing games with real lives and real people in order to score cheap political points. Blocking health care reform won't break the President of the United States of America, but it will break American families, it will break American businesses; it will break the bank.

America deserves better. Congress knows that most Americans like their doctors, their providers, and their coverage. On the days they need to see a doctor, they are glad they can provide their families with coverage for booster shots, checkups, preventive, and even emergency care. But on payday, it is a very different story.

For those of our colleagues who ask how we can afford to pay for this, I want to tell them to ask Patricia Jackson—or any of their constituents—because the real question is: How can we afford not to? Especially at a time when the economy is struggling and the costs of care are rising, we need to do everything we can to rein in those costs, prevent people from losing their coverage and having to seek more expensive care in our emergency rooms.

Tonight we will hear from our President. He knows that doing nothing is not an option. The time is right, the time is now. Patricia, her family, and the millions of hard-working, taxpaying Americans across the country simply cannot wait any longer.

I urge our Senate colleagues to set aside the rhetoric and begin to look at the issues and help us solve this problem so we can move this forward.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I now ask that morning business be closed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. S. 1390, the Defense Department authorization bill.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

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

The 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 Calendar No. 89, S. 1390, the National Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2010.

Carl Levin, Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Mark Udall, Jack Reed, Jon Tester, Jeanne Shaheen, Al Franken, Evan Bayh, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Byron L. Dorgan, Daniel K. Inouye, Blanche L. Lincoln, Joseph I. Lieberman, Ron Wyden, Mary L. Landrieu.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this week, we are considering important legislation to authorize spending for the Department of Defense. Among the many activities supported by this funding are our efforts to fight al-Qaida, the Taliban, and other terrorist groups around the world and prevent another terrorist attack on our country.

The bill includes funding for a number of key priorities relating to our fight against terrorists. It provides $130 billion to fund our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Afghanistan remains the front line in the battle against terrorism, as it provides a haven for thousands of Taliban and al-Qaida fighters. And, as U.S. troops pull back from Iraqi cities, our mission in that country will increasingly focus on counterterrorism. It funds a number of key initiatives to enhance the safety of our troops and our citizens from terrorist threats, including funding for detecting and defeating improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. It funds some of our most important efforts to prevent unsecured nuclear material from falling into the hands of terrorists. It expands the size of our Special Operations Forces—the elite commando units like Navy SEALs and Army Green Berets—who lead this Nation's global ground fight against terrorism.

While the Special Operations Forces provide us a unique and unsurpassed capability, they are hardly the only group of Americans on the front lines of this fight. The Special Operations Forces are part of one of three key groups of people in our government who play a critical role in this fight. Military service members, who are fighting house-to-house, street-to-street, and village to village in Iraq and Afghanistan to identify and eliminate terrorists and insurgents. Members of the Foreign Service and USAID who, in addition to carrying out our Nation's diplomacy, are working with local leaders to build governing capacity, improve essential services, and foster economic growth. And members of our Nation's intelligence agencies, who provide the vital information we need both to keep these other public servants out of harm's way and to take the fight to the terrorists.

I want to pause for a moment to recognize and commend their tremendous service to our Nation. The courage, endurance, and sacrifice they exhibit on a

daily basis exemplify the highest values of our great Nation. And while our country has made great strides in honoring the contribution of our military service members, many of our diplomats and intelligence personnel consistently demonstrate their patriotism and commitment with hardly any public recognition.

I would like to especially honor the men and women of our Nation's intelligence services. The U.S. intelligence community has been under fire in recent weeks. The recent controversy is not over whether the CIA has done enough to go after bin Laden, or about whether it has done its job effectively. It is about whether senior leaders in the Bush administration mismanaged and misrepresented a particular program. That is an important question that our Intelligence Committee will seek to answer, but it should not call into question the distinguished service of the officers who continue to do a remarkable job for our country.

I have seen first hand some of the military and intelligence officers who are hunting Osama bin Laden and other terrorists. CIA and Air Force personnel are working around the clock, 24 hours a day, supporting the missions of Predator and Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles. Their work is a clear example of military and intelligence personnel making a significant difference in protecting the safety of American citizens on a daily basis.

According to press reports, since January 1, 2008, UAVs have carried out more than 50 separate strikes against terrorists and insurgents in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, killing more than 300 terrorists and insurgents, including over 15 top leaders of the Taliban and al-Qaida. In addition, press reports indicate UAVs have also conducted surveillance and reconnaissance missions that have been critical in identifying and tracking targets for strikes by other military assets. In Nevada and around the world, members of our Armed Forces, intelligence services, and foreign services are on the front lines of our fight against terrorism. It is a fight we will win thanks to their dedication and sacrifice. As we continue debate on the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense Authorization Act, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing and commending their tremendous service to our Nation.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise in support of an amendment to be offered by my good friend, the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. LIEBERMAN.

The purpose of this amendment is straightforward: it seeks to make sure that the missile defense system deployed in Europe is as cost-effective and as capable of protecting the United States as the installation of ground-based midcourse defense missile defense interceptors and early warning radars proposed by the last administration; that proposal was endorsed by the NATO alliance and embraced by the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic.

This system is important not just because it provides the U.S. with a much needed defense against the long-range ballistic missile threat of Iran, but also because of what it says about the alliance between the United States and these two countries. It is significant that Poland and the Czech Republic, which spent the better part of the 20th century as oppressed satellites of the Soviet Union have so earnestly sought to align themselves with the United States to confront the threats of the 21st century.

This deployment is clearly in U.S. interests. The Congressional Budget Office, CBO, recently concluded a study of the options—current and future—to protect the U.S. and its allies from the Iranian threat. The results of that study were clear: only the Polish and Czech deployments can protect the United States and Europe; any other option costs more and defends the U.S. less, if at all.''[1]

Let me quote from this CBO study, ''Options for Deploying Missile Defenses in Europe'':

Of the modeled options, MDA's proposed European system would provide the most extensive defense of the United States, covering the entire continental United States against liquid-fuel ICBMs and covering all of the threatened portion of the continental United States plus part of Alaska against solid-fuel ICBMs.[2]

The reason for this deployment is plain: the STRATCOM and EUCOM Commanders said to Congress in a July 24, 2008 letter:

We are in complete agreement that Europe requires a layered defense enabled by a robust network of sensors in and a credible interceptor capability. Iran's actions last week illustrate the imperative for credible global missile defenses. We cannot wait to counter a long-range, WMD-capable, Iranian missile threat. Deploying missile defenses in Europe would demonstrate our resolve to deter this threat and protect our nation and allies by providing a critical capability to the warfighter.

As Combatant Commanders responsible for both United States military operations in the European theater (EUCOM) and global missile defense plans, operations, and capability (STRATCOM), our best military advice leads us to strongly endorse the President's funding request for European missile defense sites. These capabilities remain critical to defending America and our allies in Europe and for deterring our adversaries today and in the future.[3]

That is why I am a cosponsor and supporter of the Lieberman amendment.

ENDNOTES

[1] CBO study, ''Options for Deploying Missile Defenses in Europe.'' Pg. xv. (February 2009). (Quoting CBO: ''Overall, CBO estimates, Option 1 would cost between $9 billion and $13 billion; Option 2, between $18 billion and $22 billion; Option 3, between $9 billion and $13 billion; and Option 4, between $10 billion and $14 billion. (Those and other cost estimates in this report are in 2009 dollars.)'')

[2] CBO, pg. 37. (Quoting the CBO study: ''Option 4, with its Kinetic Energy Interceptors, would also provide substantial added coverage of the United States, particularly against solid-fuel ICBMs. The systems using SM–3 Block IIA interceptors (Options 2 and 3) offer the least additional defense of the United States: almost none against solid-fuel ICBMs and coverage of only parts of the northeastern (and, in the case of Option 2, central) United States against liquid fuel ICBMs.'')

[3] General Kevin P. Chilton and General Bantz J. Craddock. Letter to Senator Robert C. Byrd. 14 July 2008.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the following documents: (1) an open letter to the Obama administration from leading Europeans, including Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel, who warn in strong terms that the so-called U.S.-Russia reset must not come at the expense of mutual interests between the U.S. and the nations of central and eastern Europe; (2) a recent New York Times article, ''Eastern Europe Is Uneasy Over U.S. Ties with Russia''; and (3) an op-ed from yesterday's Washington Post, ''A Letter From Europe: U.S. leadership in the post-Soviet age is needed to face new challenges.''

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

[July 15, 2009]

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

(By Valdas Adamkus, Martin Butora, Emil Constantinescu, Pavol Demes, Lubos Dobrovsky, Matyas Eorsi, Istvan Gyarmati, Vaclav Havel, Rastislav Kacer, Sandra Kalniete, Karel Schwarzenberg, Michal Kovac, Ivan Krastev, Alexander Kwasniewski, Mart Laar, Kadri Liik, Janos Martonyi. Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Adam Rotfeld, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Alexandr Vondra, Lech Walesa.)

We have written this letter because, as Central and Eastern European (CEE) intellectuals and former policymakers, we care deeply about the future of the transatlantic relationship as well as the future quality of relations between the United States and the countries of our region. We write in our personal capacity as individuals who are friends and allies of the United States as well as committed Europeans.

Our nations are deeply indebted to the United States. Many of us know firsthand how important your support for our freedom and independence was during the dark Cold War years. U.S. engagement and support was essential for the success of our democratic transitions after the Iron Curtain fell twenty years ago. Without Washington's vision and leadership, it is doubtful that we would be in NATO and even the EU today.

We have worked to reciprocate and make this relationship a two-way street. We are Atlanticist voices within NATO and the EU. Our nations have been engaged alongside the United States in the Balkans, Iraq, and today in Afghanistan. While our contribution may at times seem modest compared to your own, it is significant when measured as a percentage of our population and GDP. Having benefited from your support for liberal democracy and liberal values in the past, we have been among your strongest supporters when it comes to promoting democracy and human rights around the world.

Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, however, we see that Central and Eastern European countries are no longer at the heart of American foreign policy. As the new Obama Administration sets its foreign-policy priorities, our region is one part of the world that Americans have largely stopped worrying about. Indeed, at times we have the impression that U.S. policy was so successful that many American officials have now concluded that our region is fixed once and for all and that they could ''check the box'' and move on to other more pressing strategic issues. Relations have been so close that many on both sides assume that the region's transatlantic orientation, as well as its stability and prosperity, would last forever.

That view is premature. All is not well either in our region or in the transatlantic relationship. Central and Eastern Europe is at a political crossroads and today there is a growing sense of nervousness in the region. The global economic crisis is impacting on our region and, as elsewhere, runs the risk that our societies will look inward and be less engaged with the outside world. At the same time, storm clouds are starting to gather on the foreign policy horizon. Like you, we await the results of the EU Commission's investigation on the origins of the Russo-Georgian war. But the political impact of that war on the region has already been felt. Many countries were deeply disturbed to see the Atlantic alliance stand by as Russia violated the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, and the territorial integrity of a country that was a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace and the Euroatlantic Partnership Council—all in the name of defending a sphere of influence on its borders.

Despite the efforts and significant contribution of the new members, NATO today seems weaker than when we joined. In many of our countries it is perceived as less and less relevant—and we feel it. Although we are full members, people question whether NATO would be willing and able to come to our defense in some future crises. Europe's dependence on Russian energy also creates concern about the cohesion of the Alliance. President Obama's remark at the recent NATO summit on the need to provide credible defense plans for all Alliance members was welcome, but not sufficient to allay fears about the Alliance's defense readiness. Our ability to continue to sustain public support at home for our contributions to Alliance missions abroad also depends on us being able to show that our own security concerns are being addressed in NATO and close cooperation with the United States

We must also recognize that America's popularity and influence have fallen in many of our countries as well. Public opinions polls, including the German Marshall Fund's own Transatlantic Trends survey, show that our region has not been immune to the wave of criticism and anti-Americanism that has swept Europe in recent years and which led to a collapse in sympathy and support for the United States during the Bush years. Some leaders in the region have paid a political price for their support of the unpopular war in Iraq. In the future they may be more careful in taking political risks to support the United States. We believe that the onset of a new Administration has created a new opening to reverse this trend but it will take time and work on both sides to make up for what we have lost.

In many ways the EU has become the major factor and institution in our lives. To many people it seems more relevant and important today than the link to the United States. To some degree it is a logical outcome of the integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU. Our leaders and officials spend much more time in EU meetings than in consultations with Washington, where they often struggle to attract attention or make our voices heard. The region's deeper integration in the EU is of course welcome and should not necessarily lead to a weakening of the transatlantic relationship. The hope was that integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the EU would actually strengthen the strategic cooperation between Europe and America.

However, there is a danger that instead of being a pro-Atlantic voice in the EU, support for a more global partnership with Washington in the region might wane over time. The region does not have the tradition of assuming a more global role. Some items on the transatlantic agenda, such as climate change, do not resonate in the Central and Eastern European publics to the same extent as they do in Western Europe.

Leadership change is also coming in Central and Eastern Europe. Next to those, there are fewer and fewer leaders who emerged from the revolutions of 1989 who experienced Washington's key role in securing our democratic transition and anchoring our countries in NATO and EU. A new generation of leaders is emerging who do not have these memories and follow a more ''realistic'' policy. At the same time, the former Communist elites, whose insistence on political and economic power significantly contributed to the crises in many CEE countries, gradually disappear from the political scene. The current political and economic turmoil and the fallout from the global economic crisis provide additional opportunities for the forces of nationalism, extremism, populism, and anti-Semitism across the continent but also in some other countries.

This means that the United States is likely to lose many of its traditional interlocutors in the region. The new elites replacing them may not share the idealism—or have the same relationship to the United States—as the generation who led the democratic transition. They may be more calculating in their support of the United States as well as more parochial in their world view. And in Washington a similar transition is taking place as many of the leaders and personalities we have worked with and relied on are also leaving politics.

And then there is the issue of how to deal with Russia. Our hopes that relations with Russia would improve and that Moscow would finally fully accept our complete sovereignty and independence after joining NATO and the EU have not been fulfilled. Instead, Russia is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods. At a global level, Russia has become, on most issues, a status-quo power. But at a regional level and vis-a-vis our nations, it increasingly acts as a revisionist one. It challenges our claims to our own historical experiences. It asserts a privileged position in determining our security choices. It uses overt and covert means of economic warfare, ranging from energy blockades and politically motivated investments to bribery and media manipulation in order to advance its interests and to challenge the transatlantic orientation of Central and Eastern Europe.

We welcome the ''reset'' of the American-Russian relations. As the countries living closest to Russia, obviously nobody has a greater interest in the development of the democracy in Russia and better relations between Moscow and the West than we do. But there is also nervousness in our capitals. We want to ensure that too narrow an understanding of Western interests does not lead to the wrong concessions to Russia. Today the concern is, for example, that the United States and the major European powers might embrace the Medvedev plan for a ''Concert of Powers'' to replace the continent's existing, value-based security structure. The danger is that Russia's creeping intimidation and influence-peddling in the region could over time lead to a de facto neutralization of the region. There are differing views within the region when it comes to Moscow's new policies. But there is a shared view that the full engagement of the United States is needed.

Many in the region are looking with hope to the Obama Administration to restore the Atlantic relationship as a moral compass for their domestic as well as foreign policies. A strong commitment to common liberal democratic values is essential to our countries. We know from our own historical experience the difference between when the United States stood up for its liberal democratic values and when it did not. Our region suffered when the United States succumbed to ''realism'' at Yalta. And it benefited when the United States used its power to fight for principle. That was critical during the Cold War and in opening the doors of NATO. Had a ''realist'' view prevailed in the early 1990s, we would not be in NATO today and the idea of a Europe whole, free, and at peace would be a distant dream.

We understand the heavy demands on your Administration and on U.S. foreign policy. It is not our intent to add to the list of problems you face. Rather, we want to help by being strong Atlanticist allies in a U.S.-European partnership that is a powerful force for good around the world. But we are not certain where our region will be in five or ten years time given the domestic and foreign policy uncertainties we face. We need to take the right steps now to ensure the strong relationship between the United States and Central and Eastern Europe over the past twenty years will endure.

We believe this is a time both the United States and Europe need to reinvest in the transatlantic relationship. We also believe this is a time when the United States and Central and Eastern Europe must reconnect around a new and forward-looking agenda. While recognizing what has been achieved in the twenty years since the fall of the Iron Curtain, it is time to set a new agenda for close cooperation for the next twenty years across the Atlantic.

Therefore, we propose the following steps:

First, we are convinced that America needs Europe and that Europe needs the United States as much today as in the past. The United States should reaffirm its vocation as a European power and make clear that it plans to stay fully engaged on the continent even while it faces the pressing challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the wider Middle East, and Asia. For our part we must work at home in our own countries and in Europe more generally to convince our leaders and societies to adopt a more global perspective and be prepared to shoulder more responsibility in partnership with the United States.

Second, we need a renaissance of NATO as the most important security link between the United States and Europe. It is the only credible hard power security guarantee we have. NATO must reconfirm its core function of collective defense even while we adapt to the new threats of the 21st century. A key factor in our ability to participate in NATO's expeditionary missions overseas is the belief that we are secure at home. We must therefore correct some self-inflicted wounds from the past. It was a mistake not to commence with proper Article 5 defense planning for new members after NATO was enlarged. NATO needs to make the Alliance's commitments credible and provide strategic reassurance to all members. This should include contingency planning, prepositioning of forces, equipment, and supplies for reinforcement in our region in case of crisis as

originally envisioned in the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

We should also re-think the working of the NATO-Russia Council and return to the practice where NATO member countries enter into dialogue with Moscow with a coordinated position. When it comes to Russia, our experience has been that a more determined and principled policy toward Moscow will not only strengthen the West's security but will ultimately lead Moscow to follow a more cooperative policy as well. Furthermore, the more secure we feel inside NATO, the easier it will also be for our countries to reach out to engage Moscow on issues of common interest. That is the dual track approach we need and which should be reflected in the new NATO strategic concept.

Third, the thorniest issue may well be America's planned missile-defense installations. Here too, there are different views in the region, including among our publics which are divided. Regardless of the military merits of this scheme and what Washington eventually decides to do, the issue has nevertheless also become—at least in some countries—a symbol of America's credibility and commitment to the region. How it is handled could have a significant impact on their future transatlantic orientation. The small number of missiles involved cannot be a threat to Russia's strategic capabilities, and the Kremlin knows this. We should decide the future of the program as allies and based on the strategic plusses and minuses of the different technical and political configurations. The Alliance should not allow the issue to be determined by unfounded Russian opposition. Abandoning the program entirely or involving Russia too deeply in it without consulting Poland or the Czech Republic can undermine the credibility of the United States across the whole region.

Fourth, we know that NATO alone is not enough. We also want and need more Europe and a better and more strategic U.S.-EU relationship as well. Increasingly our foreign policies are carried out through the European Union—and we support that. We also want a common European foreign and defense policy that is open to close cooperation with the United States. We are the advocates of such a line in the EU. But we need the United States to rethink its attitude toward the EU and engage it much more seriously as a strategic partner. We need to bring NATO and the EU closer together and make them work in tandem. We need common NATO and EU strategies not only toward Russia but on a range of other new strategic challenges.

Fifth is energy security. The threat to energy supplies can exert an immediate influence on our nations' political sovereignty also as allies contributing to common decisions in NATO. That is why it must also become a transatlantic priority. Although most of the responsibility for energy security lies within the realm of the EU, the United States also has a role to play. Absent American support, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline would never have been built. Energy security must become an integral part of U.S.-European strategic cooperation. Central and Eastern European countries should lobby harder (and with more unity) inside Europe for diversification of the energy mix, suppliers, and transit routes, as well as for tough legal scrutiny of Russia's abuse of its monopoly and cartel-like power inside the EU. But American political support on this will play a crucial role. Similarly, the United States can play an important role in solidifying further its support for the Nabucco pipeline, particularly in using its security relationship with the main transit country, Turkey, as well as the North-South interconnector of Central Europe and LNG terminals in our region.

Sixth, we must not neglect the human factor. Our next generations need to get to know each other, too. We have to cherish and protect the multitude of educational, professional, and other networks and friendships that underpin our friendship and alliance. The U.S. visa regime remains an obstacle in this regard. It is absurd that Poland and Romania—arguably the two biggest and most pro-American states in the CEE region, which are making substantial contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan—have not yet been brought into the visa waiver program. It is incomprehensible that a critic like the French anti-globalization activist Jose Bove does not require a visa for the United States but former Solidarity activist and Nobel Peace prizewinner Lech Walesa does. This issue will be resolved only if it is made a political priority by the President of the United States.

The steps we made together since 1989 are not minor in history. The common successes are the proper foundation for the transatlantic renaissance we need today. This is why we believe that we should also consider the creation of a Legacy Fellowship for young leaders. Twenty years have passed since the revolutions of 1989. That is a whole generation. We need a new generation to renew the transatlantic partnership. A new program should be launched to identify those young leaders on both sides of the Atlantic who can carry forward the transatlantic project we have spent the last two decades building in Central and Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, the onset of a new Administration in the United States has raised great hopes in our countries for a transatlantic renewal. It is an opportunity we dare not miss. We, the authors of this letter, know firsthand how important the relationship with the United States has been. In the 1990s, a large part of getting Europe right was about getting Central and Eastern Europe right. The engagement of the United States was critical to locking in peace and stability from the Baltics to the Black Sea. Today the goal must be to keep Central and Eastern Europe right as a stable, activist, and Atlanticist part of our broader community.

That is the key to our success in bringing about the renaissance in the Alliance the Obama Administration has committed itself to work for and which we support. That will require both sides recommitting to and investing in this relationship. But if we do it right, the pay off down the road can be very real. By taking the right steps now, we can put it on new and solid footing for the future.

[From the New York Times, July 17, 2009]

EASTERN EUROPE IS UNEASY OVER U.S. TIES WITH RUSSIA

(By Nicholas Kulish)

BERLIN.—The deep concern among America's Eastern European allies over improved relations between Russia and the United States spilled into the open on Thursday when 22 prominent figures, including Poland's Lech Walesa and the Czech Republic's Vaclav Havel, published an open letter to the Obama administration begging not to be forgotten.

In the letter, the leaders urged President Obama and his top policy makers to remember their interests as they negotiate with Russia and review plans for missile defense bases in Poland and the Czech Republic. Abandoning the missile defense plan or giving Russia too big a role in it could ''undermine the credibility of the United States across the whole region,'' the letter said.

The letter was published on the Web site of the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and was signed by former presidents, like Mr. Walesa and Mr. Havel, as well as other former heads of state, top diplomats and intellectuals from a broad range of countries, including Hungary, Bulgaria and Estonia.

''Our region is one part of the world that Americans have largely stopped worrying about,'' the letter said, even though ''all is not well either in our region or in the trans-Atlantic relationship.''

While the letter covered a range of issues, including the dangers presented to the young democracies in the region by the economic crisis, Russia was clearly central to the worries expressed by the drafters.

''There is the fear among Central and Eastern Europeans that our interest in keeping the trans-Atlantic bond could be somehow sold out to the relationship with Russia,'' Alexandr Vondra, a former minister of foreign affairs for the Czech Republic, said in a telephone interview from Washington.

Expressing concerns about the growing weakness of NATO, the leaders said that Mr. Obama's call at the recent NATO summit for ''credible defense plans for all Alliance members was welcome, but not sufficient to allay fears about the Alliance's defense readiness.''

As geostrategic interests from Afghanistan to Iran to North Korea have demanded Russian logistical or diplomatic assistance, anxiety has risen among the states known collectively as New Europe. Russia's invasion of Georgia last August only intensified those fears, as much through the American response as through Russia's own actions.

''The Georgia war exposed that there is a limit to what the United States will or can do to respond to military conflict in the neighborhood,'' said Angela E. Stent, who served as the top Russia officer at the United States government's National Intelligence Council until 2oo6 and now directs Russian studies at Georgetown University.

She added that the intentions of the administration toward its allies were not yet completely clear. ''Until now, we've heard a Russian policy but not a policy for Russia's neighborhood,'' Ms. Stent said.

The economic crisis masked these tensions for a while, but the problems never really went away in these countries, where Russia is seen as ''a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods,'' according to the letter, and where any warming of relations between Washington and Moscow raises hackles. Mr. Obama's trip to Moscow last week did nothing to reassure nervous allies in Eastern Europe.

''We all understand that a deal must come with Russia, but we do not believe that a deal can be made at the expense of the security interests of the countries of our region or of Georgia and Ukraine,'' said Eugeniusz Smolar, senior fellow at the Center for International Relations, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research group in Warsaw.

There is also a sense among many analysts and politicians in the region that the new administration does not understand Russia's true nature that friendly words from the Russian leadership when Mr. Obama is in Moscow are just words, while events like the murder of a Russian human rights campaigner on Wednesday showed the true state of Russia's civil society.

The former leaders also warned about threats within their own countries and across Europe, driven by the economic crisis, which had provided ''opportunities for the forces of nationalism, extremism, populism and anti-Semitism,'' according to the letter.

''Domestically these countries used to be led by idealistic leaders. That's still the case in some of these countries, but not all,'' said Kadri Liik, director of the International Center for Defense Studies in Tallinn, Estonia, who was among the drafters of the letter.

[From the Washington Post, July 19, 2009]

A LETTER FROM EUROPE—U.S. LEADERSHIP IN THE POST-SOVIET AGE IS NEEDED TO FACE NEW CHALLENGES

Twenty years have passed since the revolutions that restored freedom to what had been the captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe. That many Americans no longer give much thought to that part of the world testifies, in part, to the region's success. The eastward expansion of NATO and the European Union helped bring security, stability and growing prosperity; more important, the countries themselves have nurtured democratic and free-market institutions that in 1989 would have seemed unreachable.

Yet an impressive collection of former presidents and ministers from the first two decades of post-communism warn, in a letter released last week, that long-lasting success should not be assumed. ''All is not well either in our region or in the transatlantic relationship,'' they caution. Since the signatories are staunch allies of the United States and of democracy—ranging from Vaclav Havel and Alexandr Vondra of the Czech Republic to Lech Walesa and Alexander Kwasniewski of Poland to Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia and Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania—they merit a hearing.

The global recession has given room to ''nationalism, extremism, populism, and anti-Semitism'' in some of their countries, the former leaders acknowledge. At the same time, they say, ''NATO today seems weaker than when we joined'' while ''Russia is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods. . . . The danger is that Russia's creeping intimidation and influence-peddling in the region could over time lead to a de facto neutralization of the region.''

In response, they say, the Obama administration should recommit to NATO as a defense alliance, not just an expeditionary force with duties in Afghanistan and beyond. It should support pipelines that will diminish the region's dependence on Russian oil and gas. It should take care, as it evaluates planned missile-defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic that Russia opposes, to consult closely with the governments that have the most at stake. It should invest in relationships with younger generations that do not remember communism or the struggle against it.

None of this will come as news to President Obama, who has made clear, in Moscow and elsewhere, that the United States will not recognize a privileged Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact. Vice President Biden, who first delivered that message for the administration in a speech in Munich in February, presumably will reiterate it during his upcoming visit to Ukraine and Georgia. The administration nonetheless should take the letter to heart, not as a rebuke but as encouragement. Nations clamoring for a stronger U.S relationship, built on the ideals of freedom and alliance, are not so numerous that Washington can afford to take them for granted.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I voted against Senator LIEBERMAN's amendment to immediately authorize a significant increase in the size of the Army because I did not believe it was in the best interest of our troops or our national security. There is an incredible strain on the force right now, including multiple deployments and insufficient dwell time, due to our failure to promptly and fully redeploy from Iraq. Rather than spending billions of dollars to increase the size of the Army, we should promptly redeploy from Iraq so that we can focus on the global threat posed by al-Qaida and so that we can reduce the strain on our troops. Indeed, the Iraqi Government has asked us to remove our troops from Iraqi cities, and as a result many U.S. servicemembers, including Wisconsin soldiers, are sitting on their bases with no mission.

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

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

ORDER FOR STAR PRINT—S. 1474

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that S. 1474 be star printed with the changes at the desk.

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

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2009

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, Thursday, July 23; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 89, S. 1390, which is the Department of Defense authorization bill.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the filing deadline for first-degree amendments to the Defense authorization bill is 1 p.m. tomorrow.

Senators should expect rollcall votes throughout the day as we work through amendments to the bill.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senator DODD, the Senate adjourn under the previous order.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

COMMENDING WOMEN AIRFORCE PILOTS

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, today I am honored to recognize an exceptional group of women who served in World War II. When their country needed them, they answered the call and chartered a bold new course for women in the military. Sixty-seven years ago, over 1,000 courageous women became the first in United States history trained to fly an American military aircraft. These women are known as the Women Airforce Service Pilots, the WASPs. Today we offer them our sincere admiration and deepest thanks.

These women came to be known as the ''Fly Girls.'' They were patriots, they were pioneers, but above all they were pilots. They flew the same planes as their male counterparts, learned the same skills, and served the same country. They were among the first to fly the B–26 Martin Marauder and the B–29 Super Fortress. The Fly Girls, however, served as civilians rather than as members of the Armed Forces. Civilian status prevented the Fly Girls from being recognized with their military counterparts. And the 38 brave women who died during their service were not honored with flag-draped caskets, nor could their families hang gold stars in their windows.

Today we pause to recognize these women and their families with an honor that is long overdue and much deserved. I am proud to have been a cosponsor of S. 614, which authorized the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II. This bill sailed through Congress in 3 months and on July 1, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Public Law 111–40, granting the highest civilian award to this deserving group of women.

I am particularly proud of the Kansas women who served in this unique military force. Today we honor all those Kansas WASPs who have gone before us and recognize the two surviving Kansas WASPs, Meriem Anderson of Eureka, KS, and Marjorie Rees of Prairie Village, KS.

The WASPs have never asked for our praise. When Rees was asked how she felt about being overlooked for so many years she simply responded, ''We didn't resent that we were ignored so long. We've thought for years how very lucky we were to fly those wonderful airplanes.'' Her words express a quiet heroism, and remind us that the noblest act of sacrifice is the one that expects nothing in return. The accomplishments of these women, and the manner in which they have continued to conduct their lives, is a testament to their remarkable character. The thanks and recognition we offer them today pales in comparison to the gift they have given us—freedom.

Their strength has inspired many other women to also look to the skies. MAJ Gina Sabric, an F–16 fighter pilot, voiced her appreciation to the WASPs when she said, ''Women in aviation has definitely been a stepping-