

I do not have to remind anyone here of our close relationship with Colombia. I also know Colombia has emergency response capabilities which may not exist in remote areas of other countries similarly affected by severe flooding or other natural disasters, such as Pakistan. I was pleased to learn that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has people in Colombia because the devastation is on a scale more massive than any developing country could deal with alone. There may also be other ways we can provide assistance.

I also use this opportunity to note what appears to be the growing number and intensity of natural disasters around the world that are straining the international community's emergency response capabilities. While no single weather event can be definitively attributed to climate change, scientists have long predicted an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events as a result of global warming. They also predict that as many as 200 million people could be displaced by natural disasters and climate change by 2050. That would cause incalculable havoc for many countries.

President Santos, who to his credit has been out in the countryside with people who have lost family members, homes and, in many cases, everything they own, said he canceled his trip to the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Cancun so he could deal with the devastation that climate change is causing in his own country. Pakistani government officials likewise blamed climate change for the massive floods there that have affected more than 20 million people over the past several months.

Whatever the cause, and there isn't time today to discuss my views about the role that deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels play in global warming, the world's climate is unquestionably changing. And a disproportionate number of recent climate related disasters has occurred in the world's poorest countries where most people's lives depend on agriculture. They have seen their homes destroyed, crops drowned in water and buried in mud, and what few possessions they have swept away. Other countries have suffered years of drought, and water sources that have sustained life for centuries have dried up. In as little as 25 years, glaciers that millions of people and their livestock depend on for drinking water have shrunk to a fraction of their size.

These issues are going to occupy our time and severely tax our resources for the foreseeable future, and we and other countries urgently need to develop plans to try to prevent and adapt to climate change and to respond when disaster strikes.

I am encouraged that there is a new field of research specifically focused on better understanding, preventing and responding to large scale displacement of people as a result of climate change and natural disasters. Nongovernmental and international organizations

are working to develop strategies to protect the world's most vulnerable people from this growing threat. We need to support this and work together.

I commend President Santos who has not only helped to alert the world to a catastrophe that had previously gone largely unnoticed outside his country, but who has taken other important steps in his first months of office that have won the respect and support of the Colombian people. His efforts to diffuse tensions with Colombia's neighbors, to begin tackling head on the daunting economic, social and judicial challenges facing Colombia, and to appoint several top officials who have the necessary qualifications and integrity, are admirable.

After a decade of Plan Colombia, U.S.-Colombia relations are entering a new phase. While there will likely continue to be issues about which we disagree, I look forward to working with President Santos and his government on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern.

#### TRIBUTE TO LULU DAVIS

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, as we approach the end of this Congress we are saying goodbye to people with whom we have been privileged to serve over the past years. We often talk about Senators who have completed their terms. In that regard, a number of my friends will be leaving the Senate and I am making statements about them.

Today, I want to talk about a woman who has served the Senate and the American people for three decades, and whose career sets a high standard of professionalism and public service that inspires countless others. She was not elected to serve as a Senator, but she has been essential to the work of the Senate for a number of years.

Lula Johnson Davis began her Senate career as a legislative correspondent for Senator Russell Long of Louisiana. She later worked for the Democratic Policy Committee. In 1993, she became a key member of our Democratic floor staff. The floor staff is critical to the proper functioning of the Senate.

They advise Senators on floor procedure and help keep the Senate operating within the formal Senate Rules and the informal Senate practices that honor our traditions of courtesy and civility. When Senators are not bollixing up the proceedings, the floor staff facilitates the business of the Senate.

They are the unseen and unrecognized teachers for new Senators. They help guide all of us through Senate consideration and voting on every measure that comes before this body.

She leaves the Senate having started as a legislative correspondent and having risen to become the Secretary of the Majority of the U.S. Senate.

Through the decade of the 1990s and this first decade of the new century, as the assistant secretary and now secretary, it has been this woman from

Louisiana who has helped guide the Senate. We each, Senators on both sides of the aisle, owe her our gratitude. She is a professional who helps set the right tone for all of us—Senators, staff, and pages.

The young people, high school students from around the country, who continue their studies while serving as Senate pages for a semester or a summer are another group of beneficiaries of Lula's tutelage. She is a tough but fair taskmaster. Democratic pages learn that every job, no matter how small, needs to be done right.

They learn lessons that will serve them throughout their lives. She has been a mentor, friend and role model to hundreds of youngsters from around the country over the years. At the end of their tour of duty, they appreciate what she has given them and, I hope, share her respect for the Senate.

She has never failed to fulfill her duties as she has steadfastly served with a succession of Democratic leaders. In truth, she has served not just the Democratic Senate caucus but the Senate and the country.

I will miss Lula Davis and wanted to say how much I appreciate all she has done for each of us.

#### AMERICA COMPETES REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, last Friday the Senate in an act of bipartisanship reauthorized the America COMPETES Act, which was first signed into law August 9, 2007. It did so this time under unanimous consent; the last time it took 3 days of debate. I would like to note that this reauthorization continues the strong tradition of bipartisanship which augurs well for the ability of our Nation to conduct cutting edge research while innovating and competing in our global economy. In a time of concern about our budget deficit, the passing of this act by unanimous consent is an acknowledgment by the Senate as a whole that tax dollars spent on these topics is money well spent.

But behind that simple act of unanimous consent laid almost 2 years of hard work at the staff and Member level in the Senate.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER. Senator ALEXANDER worked with members of his Republican caucus to ensure their views were incorporated into this bill. He has kept his unwavering belief that the strength of our Nation, its ability to proposer and create good paying jobs, rests on the investment we make in educating our children in science and education, conducting research at universities and laboratories and using a well educated workforce to promote innovation in our global economy.

The America COMPETES Act involved the work of three Senate committees: the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee; the

Senate Committee on Health Education, Labor and Pensions, HELP; and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As before, Matt Sonnesyn, who participated in the last America COMPETES effort provided a stable and steady push to keep the bill on track. In the Commerce Committee, Ann Zulkosky on Senator ROCKEFELLER's staff worked long hours through a markup and subsequent staff drafts of the bill while at the same time managing to reauthorize NASA. Maryam Khan and Hugh Derr on Senator Hutchinson's staff worked with Ann throughout this time; Robin Juliano on Senator HARKIN's staff on the HELP committee worked with Christopher Eyler on Senator ENZI's HELP staff to ensure education programs were updated where appropriate; Jonathan Epstein on my Energy Committee staff worked tirelessly, as he did on the original bill, and along with Isaac Edwards on Senator MURKOWSKI's Energy Committee staff worked through energy programs and updated them to account for changes since the last COMPETES Act.

There are other important staff I would like to acknowledge who made this effort in the Senate a success: David Cleary on the HELP Committee, Adam Rondinone and Neena Imam in Senator ALEXANDER's personal office, Ann Begeman, Senator Hutchinson's Commerce Committee Staff Director, Ellen Doneski, staff director for the majority and Chris Martin, Andrew Ruffin, Bruce Andrews, and Brian Hendricks of the Commerce Committee; Trudy Vincent, my legislative director and Peter Zamora, my education counsel; Robyn Hiestand on the Budget Committee, Rachel Sotsky in Senator LIEBERMAN's personal office, Lula Davis, the secretary for the majority, Tim Mitchell on Senator REID's floor staff, Laura Dove the assistant secretary for the minority and Bob Simon, my Energy Committee staff director. Finally, I need to give a special thanks to the legislative counsels who worked with staff to accurately draft the bill—Lloyd Ator on the Commerce Committee, Amy Gaynor who drafted the HELP Committee text and Gary Endicott who drafted the Energy Committee text.

As you can see, the America COMPETES Act involved a large number of bipartisan staff, all working together for the common goal of promoting the ability of our nation to compete in a global economy. I am grateful to all of them for their hard work.

I am also delighted that today, December 21, the House of Representatives passed this bill as well.

#### LEONHART NOMINATION

Mr. KOHL. Madam President, I rise to announce that I have lifted the hold I placed earlier this month on Michele Leonhart's nomination to be Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, DEA. I had placed the hold re-

luctantly after numerous failed attempts to work with the agency for over a year on the issue of delivering pain medication to nursing home residents in a timely matter.

At a Special Committee on Aging hearing I chaired earlier this year, panelists detailed a recent DEA enforcement initiative that has delayed many nursing home patients from receiving much-needed medication to control their pain. For several years, nurses had been able to call into pharmacies urgently needed prescriptions following a doctor's order. Pharmacies would fill the order, patients would get their pain medication, and doctors would follow up with written confirmation of the prescription. Due to the DEA's new enforcement initiative, pharmacies face huge administrative fines if they continue to follow this practice. Most disturbingly, nursing home residents sometimes must endure the pain for hours or even days as nursing home staff try to adhere to the newly enforced regulations. Finally, nursing homes have been forced to send frail and pain-ridden residents to the emergency room, at great cost, simply to get pain medication that they used to be able to get in their nursing home.

At Ms. Leonhart's nominating hearing before the Judiciary Committee in November, I expressed my disappointment that the DEA had not followed through on the pledges made to the Aging panel in March to work with us to address the problem swiftly. Nearly 2 weeks after her confirmation hearing—and three months after submitting a draft proposal to DEA—I was told that any solution would require each State to grant nursing homes the authority to dispense controlled substances pain medications. However, any solution requiring “state-by-state” action would take many years to achieve. The urgent pain relief situation in nursing homes will not permit such a long-term approach. When the Judiciary Committee approved Ms. Leonhart's nomination, I asked to see meaningful progress on the issue prior to her final confirmation.

I am pleased to have recently received Attorney General Eric Holder's assurance that he will promptly deliver the DOJ's support for a legislative fix. As a result of our discussion, I am releasing the hold on Michele Leonhart's nomination, and I look forward to introducing a mutually acceptable legislative fix in the opening days of the 112th Congress.

Based on our agreement, DOJ will deliver draft legislation to me in January to permit the timely delivery of pain medications to nursing home residents. The legislation will deem certain nurses or other licensed health care professionals to be “authorized agents.” Those agents will be chosen and designated by the nursing home as agents of DEA-licensed practitioners—practitioners being the resident's attending physician or specialist. They will be authorized to transmit the

practitioner's order for a controlled substance, specifically schedule II drugs, to DEA-licensed pharmacies orally or by fax. The nursing home, while not licensed by DEA, will designate those authorized to transmit a practitioner's order and to make a list of those authorized agents available to the pharmacy. In exchange, nursing homes, practitioners, and pharmacies will be required to take certain steps to verify their accountability.

I happily submit for the record a document detailing the specifics of our agreed-upon framework for the legislation outlined above. I am confident that it will ensure our mutual interests are met by enabling nursing home residents to have the pain medication they need while preventing drug diversion and misuse. I would like to thank Attorney General Holder for his strong commitment to seeing that a Federal legislative solution can be moved forward in the opening weeks of the 112th Congress. After all, time is of the essence for nursing home residents who are in need of immediate pain relief.

#### CONFIRMATION OF ALBERT DIAZ

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I am pleased the Senate has confirmed the nomination of Albert Diaz of North Carolina to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Fourth Circuit.

Judge Diaz is strongly supported by his home State Senators, Senators HAGAN and BURR, and he received the highest possible rating of “well qualified” from the American Bar Association's rating committee. The process Senators HAGAN and BURR used to recommend these nominations to the President—working in a bipartisan fashion with each other and the White House—is a model for how we can improve the judicial selection and confirmation process going forward.

I chaired the confirmation hearing for Judge Diaz in December 2009, and in January 2010 the Judiciary Committee unanimously approved his nomination by a 19-0 vote.

I am disappointed that it has taken the Senate almost a full year to take final action on this nomination.

I take a special interest in the Fourth Circuit, as it includes my home State of Maryland. When President Bush was in office, in May 2008 I chaired the confirmation hearing for Justice Steven Agee, who served on the Virginia Supreme Court and was confirmed to be a U.S. circuit judge for the Fourth Circuit. Since President Obama has taken office, in April 2009 I chaired the confirmation hearing for Judge Andre Davis of Maryland, a Federal district judge in Baltimore, who was confirmed last year to be a judge on the Fourth Circuit. In October 2009, I chaired the confirmation hearing of Justice Barbara Keenan of Virginia, who had served on the Virginia Supreme Court and was confirmed in March of this year by the Senate. Finally, in December 2009, I chaired the