

point out that the United States will not have to lower a single tariff or make any market concessions on Russian imports by approving permanent normal trade relations.

All concessions will be made by Russia as a part of its agreement to join the WTO.

What does this legislation mean for my home State of California?

Among U.S. States, California is currently the 4th largest exporter to Russia, according to the Coalition for U.S. Russia Trade. According to the Business Roundtable, California exported \$665 million worth of goods to Russia in 2011, supporting 2,000 California jobs.

In 2011 California's exported \$156 million of computers and electronics to Russia, our top export. Yet, U.S. companies only held 4.2 percent of the Russian import market compared to 36.5 percent for the European Union, EU.

As part of its WTO accession, Russia agreed to eliminate tariffs on IT products and take additional actions to protect IPR, including joining the WTO Information Technology Agreement.

In 2011, California exported \$47 million of pharmaceuticals to Russia, but the EU held 77 percent of the import market. As a part of its WTO accession, Russia agreed to lower its tariff to 4.4 percent.

In 2011, California exported \$90 million of cars to Russia, the world's 6th largest car market. U.S. cars, however, make up only 4 percent of Russian imports while Japan has 40 percent of the market and the EU has 35 percent.

As a part of its WTO accession, Russia agreed to reduce its tariff on cars from 20-35 percent to 15 percent.

In addition, for California agriculture, Russia has agreed to: lower tariffs on dairy from 19.8 percent to 14.9 percent; reduce its tariff on grapes from 10 percent to 5 percent within 3 years; lower tariffs on cereals from 15.1 percent to 10 percent; and establish lower in-quota tariff rates for pork, poultry, and beef.

Unless we pass permanent normal trade relations, our foreign competitors will be able to use the concessions Russia made when joining the WTO to protect their companies and workers and increase their market share, while the United States will not be able to do the same for our companies and workers.

As a result, failure to pass this legislation will only make it harder for California and U.S. companies to compete in Russia.

The legislation would also impose sanctions on individuals linked to the incarceration and death of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.

Sergei Magnitsky was a Russian attorney who was arrested in 2008 after alleging wide-scale tax fraud by several law enforcement and government officials. He died in prison a year later due to health complications while awaiting trial.

Investigations later found that Mr. Magnitsky was beaten and did not re-

ceive proper medical attention. His case gained international attention and was used to highlight systematic violations of human rights in the Russian judicial system.

It is my hope that this provision will help bring those responsible for Mr. Magnitsky's death to justice and encourage Russia to do more to tackle corruption and promote a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law.

This is critical if Russia is to enjoy the full benefits of WTO membership and attract more foreign investment.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I understand now under the existing unanimous consent agreement we are going to be proceeding to debating a judge. I ask unanimous consent that immediately after the disposition of that nomination, I be the first Democratic Senator recognized when we return to the pending trade bill.

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

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### NOMINATION OF MICHAEL P. SHEA TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 676, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael P. Shea, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, the Senate is finally being allowed to vote today on the nomination of Michael Shea to be a district judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut. It has taken far too long for this day to come, but he will be confirmed and I congratulate him and his family on his confirmation and I congratulate the two Senators from Connecticut on finally having this nomination come to a vote.

I mention this not to urge that we confirm him because we will—and I will very proudly vote for him—but Michael Shea is another nominee whose nomination was stalled for months for no good reason. The Judiciary Committee—and the distinguished Presiding Officer serves on that committee and will recall—we gave his nomination strong bipartisan support more than 7 months ago. He has the support of both home State Senators—both Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator BLUMENTHAL. He has significant litigation experience. He is a graduate of

Yale Law School. He clerked for the conservative Judge James Buckley in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit following graduation.

We have to ask, why did it take 7 months for the Senate to finally consider his nomination—after waiting 7 months, we will talk about it for 20 minutes, and then we will vote on his nomination. Why the 7-month delay? Republican obstruction.

After this vote, the Senate remains backlogged with 17 judicial nominations that go back to before the August recess. Senate Republicans are establishing another harmful precedent by refusing to proceed on judicial nominees with bipartisan support before the end of the session. They held up judicial nominees 3 years ago, they did it 2 years ago, they did it last year, and now they are doing it again this year.

They have found a new way to employ their old trick of a pocket filibuster. They stall nominees into the next year, and then they force the Senate, in the new year, to work on nominees from the past year. They delay and delay and delay and push other confirmations back in time and then cut off Senate consideration of any nominees.

How else does anyone explain the Republican Senate opposition to William Kayatta of Maine, who is supported by the two Republican Senators from Maine? How else to explain the Republican filibuster and continuing opposition to Robert Bacharach of Oklahoma, who has the support of Senator INHOFE and Senator COBURN, the two Republican Senators from Oklahoma? How else to explain their adamant refusal to consider the nomination of Richard Taranto to the Federal Circuit, when the Judiciary Committee had seven of the eight Republican Senators voting for him? One, Senator LEE, cast a "no" vote but said it was a protest on another matter. But every single Democrat voted for him.

These delays may serve some petty political purpose, but the American people do not want petty political purposes. They want our Nation's courts to be staffed. They want the American people who seek justice to be able to get it. So we should take action on all pending nominees and reduce the damagingly high number of judicial vacancies. Federal judicial vacancies remain above 80. By this point in President Bush's first term, we had reduced judicial vacancies to 28.

There were more than 80 vacancies when the year began. There were more than 80 vacancies this past March when the majority leader was forced to take the extraordinary step of filing cloture motions on 17 district court nominations—something I had never seen in my 37 years here. There are going to be at least 80 vacancies after today. Before we adjourn, we ought to at least vote on the 17 pending nominations that could have been and should have been confirmed before the August recess.

From 1980 until this year, when a lame duck session followed a Presidential election, every single judicial nominee reported with bipartisan Judiciary Committee support has been confirmed. That is whether there was a Republican or Democratic President or a Republican-controlled or Democratic-controlled Senate.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, no consensus nominee reported prior to the August recess has ever been denied a vote—before now. Somehow, this President is treated differently than all the other Presidents before him. I have been here with President Ford, President Carter, President Reagan, the first President Bush, President Clinton, the second President Bush, and now President Obama. None of those other Presidents were treated in the way this President is treated. It is something Senate Democrats have never done in any lame duck session, whether after a Presidential or midterm election.

In fact, Senate Democrats allowed votes on 20 of President George W. Bush's judicial nominees, including 3 circuit court nominees, in the lame duck session after the election in 2002. I remember. I was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I moved forward with those votes, including one on a very controversial circuit court nominee. The Senate proceeded to confirm judicial nominees in lameduck sessions after the elections in 2004 and 2006. Actually, in 2006, we confirmed another circuit court nominee.

We proceeded to confirm 19 judicial nominees in a lame duck session after the elections of 2010, including five circuit court nominees. The reason I am not listing confirmations for the lame duck session at the end of 2008 is because that year we had proceeded to confirm the last 10 judicial nominees approved by the Judiciary Committee in September and long before the lame duck session.

That is our history. That is our recent precedent. Those across the aisle who contend that judicial confirmation votes during lame duck sessions do not take place are wrong. The facts are facts. It is past time for votes on the 4 circuit court nominees and the other 13 district court nominees still pending on the Executive Calendar.

Let's do our job. This is what the American people pay us to do. Let's vote up or vote down, but let's vote.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, the Senate turns to the confirmation of another U.S. district judge. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Senate rarely confirms judicial nominees during a lameduck session in a Presidential election year. It did so in a very limited fashion in 1944, 1980, and 2004.

The last time a President was re-elected—President Bush in 2004—only

three judicial nominees were confirmed following the election. That year, following President Bush's re-election, 23 judicial nominations that were pending either on the Senate Executive Calendar or in the Judiciary Committee were returned to the President when the Congress adjourned in December.

Today's vote, the second post-election judicial confirmation, is somewhat of a milestone for this President. It is the 100th judicial confirmation during this Congress. That happens to be the same number of confirmations during President Bush's first term when the Democrats controlled the Senate and chaired the Judiciary Committee. I have heard the chairman rightfully take pride in that accomplishment. Today we match that record. So I think that the continued complaints we hear about how unfairly this President has been treated are unfounded.

Despite our cooperation, we continue to hear the other side argue that since the President won re-election, we shouldn't follow past practice, but rather we should confirm a large number of nominations during this lame-duck session. Recently one of my colleagues on the other side stated: "From 1980 until this year, when a lame duck session followed a presidential election, every single judicial nominee reported with bipartisan Judiciary Committee support has been confirmed."

I suppose this is meant to imply there is some long record of routine confirmations following a Presidential election. But again, that is simply not the case. The record is one circuit confirmation in 1980, and three district confirmations in 2004. That is it. From 1980 through 2008, those four nominations represent the entire list. With today's vote we will add two more confirmations to that exclusive list.

This year we have already confirmed 32 district judges and 5 circuit judges. Today's vote meets or exceeds the confirmations for Presidential election years in recent memory. In fact, going back to 1984, there has been only one Presidential election year in which more district judges were confirmed. Let me emphasize that point: In only one of the past eight Presidential elections have more district nominees been confirmed.

Today we vote on the nomination of Michael P. Shea, to be U.S. district judge for the District of Connecticut. With this confirmation, the Senate will have confirmed 160 of President Obama's nominees to the district and circuit courts. During the last Presidential election year, 2008, the Senate confirmed a total of 28 judges—24 district and 4 circuit. This Presidential election year we have exceeded those numbers. We have confirmed 5 circuit nominees, and Mr. Shea's confirmation will be the 33rd district judge confirmation. That is a total of 38 judges this year versus 28 in the last Presidential election year.

Finally, I would note that Mr. Shea was not reported out of committee by a unanimous vote. There were concerns about part of his record, and that resulted in a few "no" votes in committee. I supported the nomination in committee and will do so again today. But for those who argue that the Republicans have delayed this nomination just to obstruct, that is not the case.

Mr. Shea received his B.A. from Amherst College in 1989 and his J.D. from Yale Law School in 1993. Following graduation from law school, he clerked for James Buckley, U.S. circuit judge for the District of Columbia Circuit. Mr. Shea began his legal career in 1994 at Clearly, Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton in Washington, DC where he worked primarily on civil and criminal antitrust matters. In October 1995, he moved to Clearly Gottlieb's Brussels, Belgium, office, where he continued to work on antitrust matters, including European Union antitrust issues, as well as international business transactions in Eastern Europe and Africa. In the summer of 1998, he returned to the DC office where he assisted in defending a corporate client in a large money laundering prosecution.

In September 1998, Mr. Shea returned to Connecticut, accepting a position as an associate at Day, Berry & Howard, now known as Day Pitney. In 2003, he became a partner with the firm. His career there has spanned a broad range of civil and criminal litigation. His practice included trials and appeals in commercial, civil rights, personal injury, criminal, family, and other cases.

He has tried nine cases to verdict, judgment or final decision. In the past decade, he argued 20 appeals, including 6 at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary gave him a Unanimous Qualified rating.

Again, I support this nomination and congratulate Mr. Shea on his anticipated confirmation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the nomination of Michael Shea to serve as the next Federal district court judge for the District of Connecticut. As the Presiding Officer heard—and I did as well—Chairman LEAHY and Senator GRASSLEY expressed very different analyses of the pace at which this Senate is confirming judicial nominations of President Obama, but I note, with gratitude, that both of them expressed support for this particular judge, Michael Shea, and it gives me confidence that he will receive the confirmation vote today that he deserves.

I suppose, because I am at the end of the privilege of serving as a Senator for 24 years, I am looking back at various opportunities and experiences I have had.

It strikes me at this moment that I should say what I am sure is felt by all

of my colleagues; that is, while it is often said of Presidents of the United States that the most important decisions they make are the people they put on the Federal bench, particularly Justices of the Supreme Court because those Justices and judges serve long after a President has left office and continue to affect the course of our country of justice under law, the same really can be said with regard to Senators and the role we play in proposing nominees for the Federal district courts in our States.

I must say as I look back at the time I have been privileged to be in the Senate, working with Senator Dodd and now with Senator BLUMENTHAL, I am proud of the people we have helped onto the district courts for the District of Connecticut, obviously, with a lot of support from nominating Presidents of both parties and from people of both parties in the Senate Judiciary Committee and on the Senate floor.

The district court bench in Connecticut is an impressive group and quite a diverse one as well. Michael Shea, if confirmed, will add to its excellence and its legal heft. In November of last year, Judge Christopher Droney left the district court when the Senate confirmed his nomination to serve on the Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Judge Droney's vacancy gave Senator BLUMENTHAL and me the opportunity to recommend his replacement.

We took this responsibility seriously. We brought together an advisory panel of nine Connecticut citizens who considered more than 20 candidates for this spot. The panel included a former chief justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, a former U.S. attorney, several partners at major Connecticut and national law firms, and academic, business, and community leaders throughout the State. Their insights and hard work throughout the process were invaluable to my colleague from Connecticut and I. I express on this floor my gratitude to them for their service.

Based on the work of the advisory panel and our review of its recommendations, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I recommended Michael Shea to the President for nomination. I will say that Michael was ranked very high among the highly qualified applicants for this position by all members of the advisory panel. I should say right at the outset that we are grateful to President Obama for nominating him for this place on our court.

Michael Shea is a native of West Hartford, CT, a graduate of Amherst College and Yale Law School, served as a clerk to Judge James Buckley, though a resident of Connecticut, and sat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Michael Shea clerked for Judge Buckley in 1993 and 1994. I will say that Judge Buckley sent our advisory committee and, I believe, the Judiciary Committee and Senator BLUMENTHAL and me a very thoughtful,

positive, personal letter of recommendation on Mr. Shea's behalf.

After concluding his clerkship, Michael Shea joined the firm of Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton as an associate, where he stayed for 4 years working on both criminal and civil cases and for a period of time was dispatched to the Brussels, Belgium, office of the firm working on an anti-trust investigation. But much more significant than his legal work, in Brussels he met his wife Frederique, and together they now have three wonderful children.

Since 1998, Michael Shea has been a partner at Day Pittney, LLP, where his practice has included trials and appeals in commercial, civil rights, personal injury, criminal, and other cases. He is currently the chair of the firm's Appellate Practice Group. But we found in talking to lawyers and judges around Connecticut on the State and Federal bench that Michael Shea is quite simply one of the most experienced and broadly respected litigators in our State.

If confirmed, he will bring to the district bench an enormous background of experience in our courts. I want to add that Michael Shea also serves his community in various charitable organizations, including the Nutmeg Big Brothers and Sisters, and the Supreme Court Historical Society.

In 2008, as a result of pro bono work Michael has consistently done representing indigent criminal defendants, he received the Connecticut Bar Association's Pro Bono Award for successfully protecting a young mother from having to return her children to an abusive father who lived abroad.

First, I thank Michael Shea for his interest in serving on the Federal bench of Connecticut. I am honored to present him, along with Senator BLUMENTHAL, to our colleagues in the Senate. He is a first class nominee.

Again, I thank the President for nominating him. I am confident that the President's trust in Mr. Shea will be more than vindicated by the years of judicial service that he will give our State and country.

I am now glad to yield the floor to my colleague from Connecticut, Senator BLUMENTHAL, who I am sure, with my successor, CHRIS MURPHY, will continue to fill vacancies as they arise. There is one now with the same high level of nominee as we have been privileged to do together in this case.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, let me first thank my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, for the extraordinary work he and my predecessor, Senator Dodd, have done in filling our U.S. District Courts with some of the most eminent jurists in the United States.

As he has remarked so eloquently, part of the living legacy of the Senate and of individual Senators is, in fact, the men and women whom we recommend to serve in this critically important decision.

As someone who has been a trial lawyer, who has practiced for a few decades in the Federal district courts of our country, I know personally that these men and women for most Americans are the voice and face of justice in our Federal courts. The U.S. Supreme Court may be the highest Court in the land, but most litigants go no higher than the U.S. District Court, and for them fairness and justice is the voice and face of the U.S. district judge.

So I thank the Senator for the great work he has done. In decisions based on merit, without regard to personality or politics, he has participated in recommending some of the best of the best men and women to serve on our Federal bench.

Michael Shea epitomizes that quality of fairness, intellect, and dedication to public service. He is a native of Connecticut, but his experience is national and international in scope. I am not going to repeat all of the extraordinary credentials that Senator LIEBERMAN has described so well. I just want to say that on a level that is as important as any professional credentials in terms of temperament, he is the kind of person we want on our bench. He is unassuming, unassuming, self-effacing, understated, but powerfully attentive to individual facts and personal circumstances.

He has compassion and conviction, principle and impeccable honesty and integrity, and he has an empathy for people who are in distress, who are in need of somebody to listen. That may be a quality that is preeminently important on the bench, the ability to listen and the attention to detail.

Mr. Shea has served as counsel for criminal defendants. He has argued 20 appeals, including 6 to the Second Circuit. He has tried 9 cases to verdict. He has served as counsel to the Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocese in first amendment matters. I worked with him personally in a professional capacity when I was attorney general of the State of Connecticut. I know him as someone who will do justice and love mercy.

He is a man whom we can be proud to support. I am proud to support him. I thank President Obama for nominating him and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, PATRICK LEAHY, for his leadership on our committee in making sure he had a hearing and a vote, and now this vote is here.

I thank also our ranking member, Senator GRASSLEY, for his graciousness in stating that he would support him. My hope is that the U.S. District Court of Connecticut, which faces a backlog now, will have the good fortune to have remaining vacancies filled at the earliest possible date by lawyers as eminently qualified as soon-to-be judge Michael Shea. I thank this body in advance for approving him.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BINGAMAN. I yield back all remaining time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Michael P. Shea, of Connecticut, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Connecticut?

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WEBB) are necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. DEMINT), and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. DEMINT) would have voted "nay," and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "nay."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 23, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 222 Ex.]

#### YEAS—72

Akaka	Graham	Merkley
Ayotte	Grassley	Mikulski
Baucus	Hagan	Moran
Begich	Harkin	Murkowski
Bennet	Hatch	Murray
Bingaman	Hoeven	Nelson (NE)
Blumenthal	Inouye	Nelson (FL)
Boxer	Johanns	Portman
Brown (MA)	Johnson (SD)	Pryor
Brown (OH)	Johnson (WI)	Reed
Burr	Kerry	Reid
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sanders
Cardin	Kohl	Schumer
Carper	Kyl	Sessions
Casey	Landrieu	Shaheen
Coats	Lautenberg	Shelby
Collins	Leahy	Snowe
Conrad	Levin	Stabenow
Coons	Lieberman	Tester
Corker	Lugar	Udall (CO)
Durbin	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Feinstein	McCain	Warner
Franken	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Menendez	Wyden

#### NAYS—23

Barrasso	Enzi	Risch
Blunt	Heller	Roberts
Boozman	Hutchison	Rubio
Chambliss	Inhofe	Thune
Coburn	Isakson	Toomey
Cochran	Lee	Vitter
Cornyn	McConnell	Wicker
Crapo	Paul	

#### NOT VOTING—5

Alexander	Kirk	Webb
DeMint	Rockefeller	

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wish to explain my vote against Mr. Michael

Shea, nominee to the District Court of Connecticut. My decision is based on Mr. Shea's assistance in drafting an anticus brief in the Supreme Court case of Kelo v. New London on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and other municipalities.

The Kelo decision delivered a serious blow to private property rights by upholding a municipality's use of eminent domain to seize private homes and transfer the property to a pharmaceutical company for purposes of "economic development." As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated in her dissent, the "Court abandoned its long-held, basis limitation on government power" in the Kelo case. The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution states: "No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." The Kelo decision altered what was traditionally viewed as "public use." As Justice O'Connor noted, as a result of this decision, "Nothing is to prevent the State from replacing any Motel 6 with a Ritz-Carlton, any home with a shopping mall, or any farm with a factory. . . . Any property may now be taken for the benefit of another private party, but the fallout from this decision will not be random. The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, including large corporations and development firms."

In contrast, Mr. Shea's amicus brief argued the eminent domain action taken by New London was constitutional and should be upheld. He asserted the "taking of some of the petitioners' homes" is "undeniably a genuine cost of realizing the City's goal of improving the economic well-being of its citizens." But, the Public Use Clause "sweeps as broadly as the [State's] police powers." He said siding with the Kelo plaintiffs in the case would "contort" the Public Use Clause. Justice Stevens, the author of the 5-4 majority opinion in Kelo, cited Mr. Shea's brief in his opinion.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of this case is the "economic development" that was key to the taking being a "public use" never happened because the developer could not get funding. Susette Kelo lost her property for nothing. The site of her former home is a garbage dump. This fact exposes another reason the takings clause was only intended for public use, because the government is more likely to have the funding ready to use the property. Normally, I would not hold a lawyer responsible for the legal views of his clients, but the Kelo decision dealt such a serious blow to private property rights, a crucial element of our founding principles, and so clearly departs from the original understanding of the Constitution, I feel I must vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid

upon the table. The President shall be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate shall resume legislative session.

The Senator from Michigan.

#### RUSSIA AND MOLDOVA PNTR

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Russia PNTR bill that is before us takes a long overdue action by ending the application of Jackson-Vanik sanctions to Russia. Jackson-Vanik is no longer relevant to Russia because Russia no longer restricts the free emigration of its people.

The Soviet Union began to relax its restrictions on Jewish emigration in 1987, during Gorbachev's perestroika. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, millions of Soviet Jews were permitted to leave. Since then, Russia has allowed free emigration.

I have felt for a long time that we should have graduated Russia from Jackson-Vanik when Jackson-Vanik's noble purpose was achieved, rather than waiting years, often in the effort to make other points relative to Russia on other issues. First some history.

In 2007, I met with Rabbi Lazar, chief rabbi of Russia, regarding Jackson-Vanik. He urged passage of legislation ending the application of Jackson-Vanik to Russia.

Also in 2007, I received a letter from the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities, which represents presidents and rabbis of over 200 Jewish communities in Russia, a letter which urged me to work to graduate Russia from the Jackson-Vanik amendment in view of the fact that its goals had already been met. Part of his letter reads as follows:

[We are thankful for all your efforts toward gaining freedom for our country's Jews. We will always appreciate the role of Jackson-Vanik in bringing about change. We also remain grateful to those who forced the U.S.S.R.'s Communist regime to permit Jews to emigrate, and to end discrimination. For us this was a huge morale boost—Jews behind the Iron Curtain were thrilled that Americans were willing to risk political and economic confrontation, in order to stand up for the freedom and rights of their fellow human beings.

He continued:

Nevertheless, in the last 15 years the situation has changed, radically. The freedom for Soviet Jews to live wherever they desire was fully obtained; nearly a million Jews from the F.S.U. now live in Israel, while hundreds of thousands live in other countries throughout the world. We are positive that these developments were in part thanks to the American lawmakers who supported the Jackson-Vanik amendment. Yet we now see a backward migration, when Jews from abroad move back to Russia. This proves that Jews in Russia feel as confident as those inhabiting other countries of the Free World.

The rabbi added: "The provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment have