

because the current system doesn't exist. It doesn't work. What we have now is de facto amnesty. If we do nothing, what we have is de facto amnesty because we don't know who the undocumented are. We couldn't enforce it even if we wanted to. That is why we have to deal with this issue.

We talk about the cost of social programs. If you are on a nonimmigrant visa, you don't qualify for the social programs by current law.

Look, there is a lot of work to be done. What we announced yesterday is not a plan, it is a framework. And that framework has to now be turned into legislative language. That is a lot of hard work, but I hope people will take this as an opportunity to come up with a solution to an issue that is solvable, that we can address and bring to a conclusion. It will have to be done the right way, and it will not be easy.

In a few hours the President will give a speech in Nevada, and early press accounts concern me. I don't want to turn this into a partisan thing, though, so let me just say this: If this endeavor becomes a bidding war to see who can come up with the easiest, quickest, and cheapest pathway to a green card possible, this will not go well. We now have a commonsense and reasonable set of principles. And I hope what the President will say today is he hopes that process succeeds. But if his intentions are to trigger a bidding war to see who can come up with the easiest process, this is not a good start. But let's give him the benefit of the doubt. I hope my colleagues will do the same.

I am deeply committed to the rule of law and to having an immigration system that works. I hope we can work together to accomplish that.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 1, the nomination of Senator JOHN KERRY to be Secretary of State, with 2 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the Record; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's

action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN FORBES KERRY TO BE SECRETARY OF STATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of JOHN FORBES KERRY, of Massachusetts, to be Secretary, Department of State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 hours of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise to speak to the nomination of Senator KERRY to be the next Secretary of State.

It has been more than 100 years since a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was directly nominated to be the Secretary of State. The last was Senator John Sherman of Ohio, who was selected to serve as Secretary of State to President McKinley. It is important to note that this historical fact exists because Senator KERRY's path isn't one commonly taken but one that is earned by a select few, and he has earned this opportunity.

From the first time JOHN testified before Chairman Fulbright as a young returning Vietnam war hero in 1971 to the day the President announced his nomination as Secretary of State, he has invested himself in all of his endeavors, always looking for the truth, for answers, uncovering the facts, hearing all the evidence, and then publicly speaking truth to power based solely on what was best for this Nation. I know he will carry those leadership traits with him into his new position, and I can think of no one better prepared to take on the challenges of this position.

As a Senator, as a member of this committee, and as a chairman, JOHN has already built strong relationships with leaders across the world, which will allow him to step seamlessly into the role of Secretary of State. Senator KERRY will need no introduction to the world's political and military leaders and will begin day one fully conversant

not only with the intricacies of U.S. foreign policy but with the understanding of the nuanced approach necessary to effectively interact on a multinational stage.

When Vice President BIDEN was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he said on more than one occasion that "good international relationships are always predicated on strong interpersonal relationships." JOHN KERRY understands there is no substitute for strong interpersonal relationships, whether in Senate politics or international diplomacy. Secretary of State is not a desk job. It requires constant personal interactions in the furtherance of American foreign policy.

During his 30 years in public life and more than 25 years in the Senate, Senator KERRY has championed many issues. Earlier today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee favorably reported his nomination to the Senate unanimously and presented Senator KERRY with an honorary resolution highlighting a few of his many accomplishments.

Amongst his accomplishments are the partnership he formed with Senator JOHN MCCAIN that led to an effort to investigate the fate of American soldiers unaccounted for in Vietnam and normalize relations with a former enemy—which is, in essence, Vietnam; his leadership of difficult, sensitive, and comprehensive investigations in the Senate on everything from the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and illegal money laundering, to the Noriega regime in Panama which is well known; advocating for democratic elections in the Philippines and serving with Senator Lugar as part of a Senate delegation that uncovered the fraud that led to the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos; working with the Cambodian Government and the United Nations to facilitate the creation of the genocide tribunal in Cambodia to prosecute key members of the Khmer Rouge; advocating for programs that help secure nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons stockpiles and materials so they don't fall into the hands of hostile states or terrorists; and leading the Senate to provide its advice and consent to ratification of the New START treaty with Russia.

During the Arab spring, Senator KERRY supported a no-fly zone over Libya, which helped to save thousands of civilians from being massacred, and he was a voice of courage and conscience in calling for President Hosni Mubarak to step aside and begin an orderly and peaceful transition to a democratic political system in Egypt.

JOHN has been a tireless advocate for the cause of peace in the Sudan and South Sudan and played an instrumental role in the successful referendum in 2011.

JOHN is well known for his bipartisan work with former majority leader Bill Frist on comprehensive HIV/AIDS legislation that laid the foundation for

the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a program that provides lifesaving treatment for people with HIV/AIDS and supports broad prevention efforts that save lives every day.

Many of you know that JOHN is a tireless and most convincing advocate for addressing global climate change and supporting the transition to a clean energy future. As chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, he convened eight major hearings and roundtables on climate change and energy security, underscoring their connection to global stability, economic competitiveness, and America's national security.

In his new role, his portfolio will be greatly expanded as he represents the interests of the Nation, from securing our Embassies and protecting our overseas personnel to promoting commerce, enhancing cross-cultural ties, and keeping America secure through cooperation where possible and isolation where necessary, as in the cases of Iran and North Korea.

Whatever the challenges we will face as a nation, in my view, the State Department could not be in better hands. When it comes to America's role in world affairs, I know we all agree that it is critical that the United States remain fully engaged, that we project not only the power of our military strength when necessary but the wisdom of our democratic ideas. I have no doubt that Senator KERRY will rise to meet these challenges as he has so consistently in his many years of service to his State and this country.

I see the distinguished ranking member on the committee, Senator CORKER, whom I look forward to working with as we move forward in the days ahead.

I think all Members will say that even when they did not agree with Chairman KERRY on a given issue, they always felt he had an open ear, an open door, an opportunity for full debate, an effort to seek the common ground, particularly in U.S. foreign policy. I believe those traits are going to serve him extraordinarily well in his role as Secretary of State as he deals with the Senate and the House of Representatives as part of promoting U.S. foreign policy in a way that brings us as cohesively together as we can to promote the national interests and securities of the United States.

I look forward at the end of this time period to a strong confirmation vote to send a message to the world that this is our Secretary of State, and he speaks for America on behalf of the Obama administration and the people of the United States.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I wish to thank the chairman for holding the business meeting the way he held it today and the hearings last week for this confirmation.

I know a lot of people think that because of the way partisan politics are

here in Washington, sometimes we can't be happy for someone on the other side of the aisle when they do well. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I just want to say that I thought Senator KERRY acquitted himself exceptionally well in the hearings we had last week. I thought they were wide-ranging, and I think he had the opportunity to display the depth of knowledge he has on many issues. I don't know of anybody who has lived a life that has been more oriented toward ultimately being Secretary of State than JOHN KERRY, and for that I also am happy for him and his family and the fact that very soon he is going to be able to express himself on behalf of our Nation in this way.

I think most of you know that his dad was a Foreign Service officer. I know that you know he certainly made a splash. Some people thought it was negative, some people, positive, but he certainly made a splash here during the Vietnam era and from that point on has been very, very active. So, again, I thought he acquitted himself exceptionally well.

There are four points I want to bring out. I know that he knows—and many of us have seen recently just because of some of the things that have happened in Libya—we have a State Department that needs some oversight, and we haven't provided it. Neither side of the aisle has provided it now for over a decade.

I know he sees the need for the Senate, through its authorization process—and the House doing the same—to be involved and to be partners with him as we try to cause this organization, which over the years has just built into a sporadic stovepipe entity, to be assisted. A lot of times when a political person comes into an organization, the bureaucracy tries to wait it out until the next person comes along. I don't think it can happen any more in any agency than it does in the State Department.

So I look forward to working with the chairman in whatever way he ends up deciding we are going to work together on this particular issue to really look at the State Department. I know Senator KERRY certainly welcomes that.

We most recently had a hearing with Senator Clinton on Benghazi, and there have been Accountability Review Board recommendations that have been put forth, and I know Senator KERRY has said he is certainly going to see those through and make sure they are fully implemented.

I know we talked a great deal in the hearing—and certainly we have done so personally—about our nuclear posture and nuclear modernization, which is a big part of what we discussed during the Start Treaty—something I supported and worked with him on—and I found his comments about where we need to be in that regard certainly reassuring.

I also think he is very clear-eyed as it relates to the threat we face as a nation, especially in north Africa now but in many places as it relates to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida. As a matter of fact, I look at Senator KERRY as a realist. While we have not always agreed on every issue, as the chairman just mentioned, I have always found him to be someone who is open to discussion. I think he wants only the best for our Nation. There is no question that as he moves ahead over the next several years, I am sure he will take positions that in some cases I and others—maybe Senator MENENDEZ—may view as not exactly the course of action that ought to be taken on behalf of our country. But my sense is that he will be open to listening, and I think he will be willing to sit down and talk about that as we move ahead.

He came out of the committee today by voice vote unanimously. As the chairman mentioned, I think he is going to receive a very strong vote of support today here on the Senate floor. As the chairman mentioned, I think that it is good for our Nation, as he goes out across the world representing us, for people to understand that this is someone who received overwhelming support from the Senate.

All of us know we live in a dangerous world. We live in a world that is changing dramatically. We live in a world in which things come over the transom on a daily and weekly basis that are unexpected. I mean, we look at what is happening right now throughout the country of Egypt, which we might not have expected to occur a week ago. To have someone like Senator KERRY, who has spent a lifetime on these issues and understands the history and institutional issues that have bound us or separated us from these countries—having someone like him representing us will be a very good thing.

I join the chairman in supporting him. I know numbers of people will have comments regarding his service here in the Senate but also his future service, and I look forward to listening to that.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I would like to join with Senator MENENDEZ and Senator CORKER in urging our colleagues to promptly confirm Senator KERRY as our next Secretary of State.

It is a great honor to serve in the Senate. It is a great privilege and honor to represent the people of Maryland here in the Senate. Part of that special privilege is the people we serve with, the incredible public servants we have had the privilege of serving with in the Senate, and I put Senator KERRY at the top of that list.

He has devoted his life to public service in the finest manner. He is so qualified to assume the responsibilities of Secretary of State. He understands this complex world in which we live and the

differences among countries. Many are strategically important to the United States. Yet they don't share our values. Senator KERRY understands that and understands the importance to advance U.S. interests—we need to understand the concerns of other countries and we need to establish relations with other countries.

He has made a personal commitment to understand the world in which we live. I do not think there has been a Member of this body who has spent more time, gone to more places, met with more people in order to represent our Nation on the international stage. Senator KERRY has always done that with the greatest degree of competency and representing our country in the finest traditions. He has broad experience; experience as a soldier serving in Vietnam, experience as a Senator, 28 years representing the people of Massachusetts in the Senate. We know about his service on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I want to talk about two other committees on which he served.

One is the Senate Finance Committee on which I had the pleasure of serving with him. There is no Senator who has taken the fiscal challenges of our country more seriously or understands the impact our fiscal condition has on our national security interests. In fact, during his confirmation hearings he mentioned the need to get our fiscal house in order. I think he understands that and understands the commitment he has, once confirmed and once heading the State Department, to help us bring about fiscal sanity in the United States to do what is necessary worldwide, but also to do it in a most cost effective way.

I also served with Senator KERRY on the Small Business Committee. The small business community did not have a better advocate when Senator KERRY was chairman of that committee. I was pleased how many times we brought out initiatives to help America and small businesses grow because we know the growth engine for jobs has come from small companies. But, clearly, it has been in the last few years that I had the privilege of serving with Senator KERRY as he chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that I got to see so up close and personal his extraordinary commitment to our country and his ability to carry out so many important responsibilities.

Senator KERRY understands our national security, yes, depends upon a strong military, but that also the other key ingredients to national security are diplomacy and development assistance.

We had Secretary Clinton before our committee. Someone mentioned that was about 1.5 percent of the budget, and she corrected it and said it is really less than 1 percent of the budget. Diplomacy and international assistance is less than 1 percent of the budget. We know what we spend on our military is a lot larger than that. All three are important to national security.

Senator KERRY understands that. He understands through diplomacy we can avoid unnecessary military action. He understands through diplomacy we can make America safer. He understands through international development assistance we can strengthen countries, make them more stable, and be less likely to need to use our military. That is the type of leader we need as Secretary of State. We have a great leader today, Secretary Clinton. I think Senator KERRY will follow in that tradition.

Take a look at Senator KERRY's record of advancing America's interests. We have a safer world today through Senator KERRY's efforts. As you know, we approved the New START treaty with Russia, reducing the amount of nuclear weapons between Russia and the United States. That makes this world safer. His record on human rights is well known. From Cambodia to Burma to Kosovo and many other places around the world, Senator KERRY has been a leader in advancing the cause of human rights.

We already heard Senator MENENDEZ point out his efforts in Vietnam. He represented America to get an accounting of our POW/MIAs. It was unprecedented in modern times to be able to go to a country with which we are at war and have that kind of accounting. Senator KERRY used his talent in order to bring closure for many American families, and that was an incredible accomplishment. Then he was able to improve the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, recognizing it is in America's interests that we are able to communicate with other countries.

I particularly appreciate his work on elevating the importance internationally of human trafficking. The United States has taken the leadership in saying, whether you are a receiving country or an origin country or a country of transport, we all have a responsibility to stop what we call modern slavery: the trafficking, usually of young girls, but also sometimes boys. The United States has taken the leadership there.

I like to think Senator KERRY's taking leadership on this started with his position on the Helsinki Commission. He is a former member of the Helsinki Commission. I now have an opportunity of being the Senate chair of the Helsinki Commission. We raised the issue of human trafficking and Senator KERRY was one of the great advocates to advance America's leadership internationally to stop human trafficking. He has protected people with disabilities.

As Senator MENENDEZ mentioned, he has been our leader on energy and climate issues, recognizing the importance of the United States to demonstrate international leadership in order to deal with a global problem, a problem that is important for us to deal with as a citizen of the world but also important for us to deal with in regard to America's economy and

America's energy needs and America's security responsibilities. Senator KERRY has been a great leader on that.

He has provided U.S. leadership for humanitarian assistance. I remember the hearings we had in the committee on Haiti and the personal commitment he made to make sure America was in the leadership for a country in our own hemisphere that suffered such a horrible disaster, and his work there was extremely important.

He led our efforts in dealing with HIV/AIDS, in doing the responsible things as far as America's position on that problem. He understands the importance of international development assistance to advance gender equality. It is interesting, if you want to take a look at the health of a country, look at the way they treat their women. We have a pretty strong commitment as far as international development assistance around the world. We need to make sure countries advance the rights of women. It is not only the right thing to do from what we believe as Americans, but it also provides a more stable country for us to have relations with. Senator KERRY understands that.

He has been one of the leaders in fighting corruption in other countries. I will always remember the hearing we had in our committee when former President Clinton and Bill Gates testified before us. These are two individuals who have headed a lot of international development assistance. They have a zero policy in dealing with countries that cannot control corruption because they want to make sure their assistance doesn't go to fuel corruption. Senator KERRY understands we don't want America's international development assistance to be used to fuel corruption. That is the type of leadership we have in the Secretary of State.

The list goes on of what he has been able to do to advance the rights and interests of the United States. I am confident that Senator KERRY's legacy of fighting for democracy, human rights, and global peace will continue as he assumes his new responsibilities as the Secretary of State for the United States of America.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I thank Chairman MENENDEZ for bringing this nomination to the floor so quickly and thank Senator CORKER for accommodating it. It is important that President Obama has his security team in place as quickly as possible. I am proud the Senate will be doing its share, its work by voting on this nomination later today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent—it has been agreed to by the Republican side as well—that any time spent during debate time in a quorum call be equally charged against both sides.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from Texas.

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

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

PASSING A BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I rise to speak about taxes, debt, and spending. It is time for President Obama to show real leadership on the biggest threat America faces to our future prosperity. As my good friend the Republican leader has said: If we don't get a handle on spending and debt, not much else matters.

It has now been 1,371 days—almost 4 years—since Democrats, who control the Senate, have brought a budget to the floor and had a vote and passed the budget. Over that time, our national debt has grown by more than \$5.2 trillion. Our credit rating has been downgraded because of fears we may not be able to pay back our debt when it is ultimately due, and we have experienced the longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression.

Since the end of the official recession in 2009, Americans' median household income has fallen by roughly \$2,500, while the cost of employer-provided family health insurance has increased by more than \$2,300—roughly a comparable amount. Not only has income fallen by \$2,500 but costs have gone up—thanks to ObamaCare—by \$2,300 for the average family.

Until recently, passing a budget was considered not optional. It was considered a basic responsibility under the law. In fact, the Budget Act requires that Congress pass a budget each year, but this law has been defied for almost 4 years in the Senate.

I realize the Democratic leader—the majority leader—has said he did not want to bring a budget to the floor because he did not want to put his Members through a series of politically tough votes.

We cannot get to this problem by dealing with tax increases. This seems to be the preferred method of dealing with our deficits and debt by raising taxes, which, of course, happened as a result of the fiscal cliff negotiations where taxes have gone up on Americans by roughly \$60 billion a year, which will amount to almost \$600 billion over the next 10 years. Nevertheless, the President's budgets continue to ask for more revenue, but the mes-

sage from this side of the aisle has been: The President has gotten his pound of flesh on taxes. Now it is time to deal with spending.

Unfortunately, we no longer have the luxury of delaying our toughest fiscal decisions. Our gross national debt is now larger than our entire economy, and we are now facing more than \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities for things such as Medicare and Social Security. Those are promises we will not be able to keep unless we act now to put them on a fiscally sustainable path.

I am glad our House colleagues have passed the no budget, no pay bill. I think most Americans appreciate the fact that if Congress doesn't do its basic work such as passing a budget—something every family and every small business in America has to do—then it should not be paid.

That has already prompted Senate Democrats to say they are going to take up a budget this year. Senator MURRAY, chairman of the Budget Committee in the Senate, says she intends to mark up a budget. Senator REID and Senator SCHUMER have said they intend to see that a budget is passed by the Chamber. But they have also said they are going to attempt to extract more taxes from hard-working, middle-class taxpayers in order to double down on Washington's spending binge.

Our biggest fiscal problem is excessive spending, not insufficient taxation. We can't raise taxes high enough to close the trillion-dollar-plus annual deficits or to make up this \$16.5 trillion hole we have dug. If we don't reduce spending and save Social Security and Medicare, then we will eventually find ourselves in a debt crisis. When that happens is when our creditors—the people who lend us money, including the Chinese and other governments—demand more interest on our loans and, eventually, interest rates go up to historic norms, the debt spirals out of control, and we reach a crisis of monumental proportions: It strangles the economy; it destroys jobs; it destroys our standard of living.

Don't take my word for it. President Obama himself has acknowledged that no amount of tax increases could sustain Medicare in its current form. He has also said public officials who are concerned about preserving government assistance for the elderly and the vulnerable have an obligation—those are his words—have an obligation to reform our entitlement programs and ensure their long-term viability. In other words, the debt is not only the single greatest threat to our national security, as former Chief of Staff Mike Mullen has said, it is also a threat to our ability to provide a safety net to the most vulnerable in our country.

I know Democrats and Republicans alike in this body understand the problem. The President himself understands the problem. In December of 2010, his bipartisan fiscal commission known as Simpson-Bowles reported the

nature of the problem and a proposed beginning of a solution. Three of the most conservative Republican Members of the Senate agreed with that commission report. However, rather than embrace it, the President walked away from it, and he has not come back to the table.

We also have another bipartisan commission headed by Alice Rivlin, who was the Director of the Office of Management and Budget under Bill Clinton, and Senator Pete Domenici, longtime chair of the Senate Budget Committee—people who understand these matters better than just about anybody. So there are solid, bipartisan proposals on the table. Yet here we are, trillions of dollars later since the Obama administration began, with no solution in sight.

The President had the American people with their back against the wall with the expiring tax provisions on December 31 which led to the so-called fiscal cliff. If we hadn't acted, taxes would have gone up more than \$3 trillion on all Americans. There would have been an enormously negative impact on the economy and jobs. So we had to come up with some sort of stop-gap solution. But the President got his pound of flesh. He got his revenue: \$600 billion over 10 years.

Now is the time to return to what the President himself has called a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Unfortunately, the President has never even proposed a balanced approach, much less a balanced budget. I can only hope that with his final election campaign behind him and with the new term ahead of him, the President can begin to grapple with and join us as we deal with our long-term fiscal challenges.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. 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. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to speak first and very personally in support of the nomination of Senator KERRY to be our next Secretary of State. There is a time when the man and the moment come together in a profoundly historic way. Senator KERRY's nomination to be Secretary of State of the United States at such a time when his leadership can be pivotal in shaping America's role in the world, as a leader for human rights, as well as the use of its extraordinary strategic power for peace.

There is also a time when the woman and a moment come together and that has been so for Hillary Clinton, who has done such extraordinary work, incomparable in transforming America's role in world history. I believe that just as she has met the challenges in guiding American foreign policy and