

needs in terms of equipment and also significant efforts to help our military members and their families readjust, retrain, reequip, and prepare for a challenging future.

Serious decisions will have to be made about the threats we face and as we anticipate new and emerging threats. Again, he is well prepared through his entire life of public service, military service, private service, administrative and business activity to confront this extraordinary range of challenges.

A lot has been made about some comments Senator Hagel has made in the last years, going back 5, 7, 8, or more years. But I know, indeed, which was reflected in his testimony, that he did not seek out this position. President Obama chose to nominate Chuck Hagel because he knew of his record, of his service to our country. He knew of his incredible commitment to the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. He knew about his experience in the private sector. He knew about his experience as a governmental leader. He knew there was an ability to rely upon his judgments, Senator Hagel's judgments, with confidence in times of crisis. I expect that the President of the United States is not going to turn to Chuck Hagel, particularly among crises, and ask him if he can he quote verbatim what he said 10 years ago. He is going to say: What are my options? What is your advice? You know about war better than anyone. You know about military policy. You know about international security. You know about the interaction of diplomacy, economics, and environmental policy. Give me your judgment. I have to make a decision.

I believe, reflecting what the Senator, my chairman, CARL LEVIN, has said, that in this difficult moment, the President of the United States needs a Secretary of Defense to provide that kind of perspective, and the men and women of the Department of Defense have to have the ability to have their voice heard decisively and definitively in those serious discussions, particularly about the deployment of military force.

As I said, I am extremely confident he can do this. Let me also say I am impressed with those who have served our country in diplomatic and military roles who have endorsed Chuck Hagel strongly and enthusiastically. These endorsements are from men and women who have served in both Democratic and Republican administrations. Among them are Bob Gates, William Cohen, Madeleine Albright, William Perry, Brent Scowcroft, Ryan Crocker, and Thomas Pickering. These men and women have devoted themselves to protecting the United States, and they have done it with extraordinary energy and effectiveness. This list of Secretaries of Defense will rank as some of the best we have ever had, and they are absolutely confident Chuck Hagel can and should do this job.

There are Ambassadors on this list who have handled delicate and difficult issues involving international law. There are several Ambassadors who have been Ambassadors to the State of Israel and strongly support Senator Hagel. All of these individuals know him. They also know as well—if not better than I and many of my colleagues—of the threats, dangers, and opportunities which face this country, and they are strongly supporting Chuck Hagel. In fact, they have concluded in a letter that he is “uniquely qualified to meet the challenges facing the Department of Defense and our men and women in uniform.”

There has been a lot of discussion about Chuck Hagel's appreciation of the strong, important, and critical relationship between the United States and State of Israel. All I can say is I was so impressed by the comments of the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, who was also the Ambassador to Washington, and who has met and dealt with Senator Hagel on a number of issues involving the relationship with the United States. The Deputy Foreign Minister said: “I have met him many times, and he certainly regards Israel as a true and natural U.S. ally.”

In another quote he said:

I know Hagel personally. . . . I think he believes in the relationship, in the natural partnership between Israel and the United States.

Here is an Israeli patriot who understands and has spent a great deal of time devoted to the relationship of the United States and Israel. In his own words, he concludes that Chuck Hagel regards Israel as a true and natural U.S. ally and will act accordingly. He is a dedicated patriot. He is an individual who has served this country in so many different ways. I support his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Also, I think it is important to state that this nomination—as we have done with every Secretary of Defense for decades—deserves an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate. People may choose to cast a vote against him for many reasons, and that is the prerogative of that Senator. I strongly believe, if we want to stay true to the traditions of this body and to the presumption that the President should be allowed to at least have his nominee voted up or down, then we have to bring this vote to the floor of the Senate for an up-or-down vote as quickly as possible.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my colleague, the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS.

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

SEQUESTRATION

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, Senator COLLINS and I are here because we

agree we must take action in this body and in this Congress to avoid sequestration. Sequestration is a term we have all been throwing around, and it refers to the automatic cuts that are scheduled to take effect on March 1. Those cuts were designed to force Congress to make a tough decision and to take comprehensive action on our debt and deficits.

I think we all agree there is no question we need a comprehensive and balanced plan to put us on a more sustainable fiscal path. I think that plan should look at all areas of spending. It should look at domestic, mandatory, and defense as well as comprehensive tax reform. I think there are many areas of bipartisan agreement on deficit reduction, including controlling the long-term cost of health care.

Unfortunately, Congress has missed several opportunities to enact a long-term plan to get our debt and deficits under control. That is why we are again facing a deadline at the end of this month to address those automatic cuts. As a result of that, we are starting to see the very real and negative consequences of our inaction. We are seeing it on our national security, and we are seeing it on our economy as businesses and agencies alike begin to prepare for the automatic cuts under sequestration.

Last week, Senator COLLINS and I wrote to the leadership in the Senate urging bipartisan action on sequestration and the need to find a better approach. In our letter, we talked about the impacts we are starting to see in New Hampshire and Maine, including the threat to jobs, our national security, and to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which is critical not only to New Hampshire and Maine but also to this country's national security. We called attention to the drastic effects we face for our economy, for our jobs, and for our national security.

Today we are here to reiterate the importance of addressing sequestration and doing it now.

I wish to thank the senior Senator from Maine, my colleague, for joining me to talk about this important issue, and I am looking forward to hearing her remarks. I know it is something she cares about as much as I do and as much as I think most of the Members of this Chamber do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, first, let me say, I am very pleased to join with my friend and colleague from New Hampshire to speak out against the indiscriminate meat-ax cuts known in Washington as sequestration that are scheduled to take effect in just 2 weeks' time. We simply must take action to avoid this self-inflicted harm to our economy and to our national security. But what I find inexplicable is a growing acceptance that sequestration is going to go into effect despite the fact that virtually everyone should concede that across-the-board cuts

where we don't set priorities do not make sense.

There are good programs that deserve to be preserved, there are programs that have outlived their usefulness and should be eliminated, and then there are programs that could be cut and reduced. That is not the approach we are taking. We are not going through the budget in a careful way by identifying programs that could be eliminated or reduced, setting priorities, and making investments. No, we are allowing to go into effect across-the-board cuts that fall disproportionately on the Department of Defense.

Indeed, we are already seeing the effects of these cuts on our military because each of the military services has begun planning for the likelihood of deep budget cuts. The Navy is preparing for a civilian hiring freeze and cutting workers at shipyards and base-operated support facilities.

I wish to be clear exactly who these employees are. These are the nuclear engineers, the welders, the metal trades workers repairing submarines and ships at the Navy's four public shipyards, including the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in my home State of Maine, which employs half of its workforce from my colleague's State of New Hampshire. I know the senior Senator from New Hampshire shares the concern about this particular installation on the border we share. But, of course, the damage of sequestration extends far beyond just one installation or two States.

Just this morning I was over at the Pentagon, and I took advantage of the opportunity to sit down with the Navy's top shipbuilding official to discuss what the impact of sequestration would be for our naval fleet. Well, one example we have already seen. The Navy will keep the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in port rather than repairing and deploying it. Across the fleet, the Navy is being forced to reduce deployments, maintenance, and overhauls for critical repairs. When we look at the shipbuilding budget, it is evident that sequestration and the continuation of a partial-year funding resolution, known as the continuing resolution, would be absolutely devastating for our Navy, for shipbuilding, and for our skilled industrial base. That includes Bath Iron Works in Maine, which I am so proud of, which builds the best destroyers in the world. This has consequences not only for our workforce, but also for our national security.

It is important to note Secretary Panetta has made clear that allowing these sweeping cuts to go into effect would be "devastating," in his words, and would badly damage the readiness of the U.S. military.

The fact is defense has already taken a huge reduction in future spending. The defense budget has been slated to be cut by \$460 billion over 10 years, and that is before sequestration. When this number is added to the defense cuts

scheduled to begin on March 1, we are looking at an enormous impact on our national security.

Now, it is important to recognize we are not saying the national debt is not a problem. Certainly, when we have a \$16.4 trillion debt, that is not sustainable, and the national debt is a security concern in its own right. Just last year, in 2012, the Federal Government spent \$223 billion in interest payments alone. That means we are spending more on interest on the national debt each month than we spent in an entire year on naval shipbuilding and the Coast Guard budget.

Just think about that. The interest payment in one month exceeds the entire Coast Guard budget and the entire budget for shipbuilding in the Navy. The estimates are that by the middle of this decade—not some distant year—our interest payments to China, our largest foreign creditor at \$1.2 trillion, will be covering the entire cost of that Communist country's military. Think of the horrific irony of that. At the same time America is bound by treaties to defend our allies in Asia against Chinese aggression, the American taxpayers are bankrolling the threat through the interest payments we are paying to the Chinese.

Neither the Senator from New Hampshire nor I am saying the Pentagon should be exempt from budget scrutiny or even future cuts, but the disproportionate impact that sequestration would have on our troops and on our national security is dangerous and it must be averted. The Department cannot continue to operate on a continuing resolution that increases costs, prevents long-term planning, and makes it impossible for the Department to function effectively.

I yield to my colleague from New Hampshire to expand on some of these points. Then we will talk further about the impact.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maine for laying out what we are seeing in terms of the potential impact of those automatic cuts. The comments and the statistics the Senator from Maine had about China and what they are going to be able to do with the money we are paying is really eye-opening and scary.

The Senator from Maine spoke about some of the impacts we are beginning to see at the ports of naval shipyards. As the Senator pointed out, it is something very important to both Maine and New Hampshire. It employs about 4,000 workers, almost evenly split between our two States. As a result of the sequester, starting March 1, one of their major projects, the repair of the USS *Miami*, which was damaged in a fire, is going to be halted immediately. Just stopped—16 days from now. The Navy is going to cut over 1,100 temporary civilian workers, mostly from shipyards such as Portsmouth. The needed maintenance and military construction will be postponed indefinitely. It is not just about those jobs at

the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard or at the shipyards across the country, but that has a ripple effect across our economy, and it affects the grocery stores and the restaurants and all of the small contractors and small businesses doing work at those shipyards.

There will be ramifications for our national defense across the services. Yesterday, we had some harrowing testimony in front of the Armed Services Committee from all of the chiefs of the military outlining what they see coming as a result of the consequences of the sequester and the continuing resolution the Senator from Maine spoke about.

DOD-wide—so across the Department—they expect to lay off a significant portion of the 46,000 temporary and term employees. All services and agencies will likely have to furlough most DOD civilian employees for up to 22 working days. Imagine that. That is a whole month of paychecks that those workers are not going to have to support their families, to be able to spend into the economy, and that is going to have a huge impact.

It is possible that DOD might not have enough funds to pay for TRICARE, health care coverage for our veterans through the end of the fiscal year. As we saw on the front pages of the paper this week, the Department delayed the deployment of the USS *Harry Truman*, the carrier strike group that was headed to the Persian Gulf. If sequestration goes into full effect, the Navy will shrink by about 50 ships and at least two carrier groups.

By the end of the year, the Navy, if we do nothing, will lose about 350 workers a week or 1,400 a month from our civilian industrial base. That will have a huge impact in New Hampshire, as I know it will in Maine as well.

So there are real, significant impacts, as the Senator from Maine pointed out, on the defense industry, on this country's national security, and on the domestic side of the budget. It is already starting to have ramifications on our economy and job growth. We saw in the last quarter of 2012 that our economy contracted for the first time since 2009, and much of that decline was due to sharp reductions in government spending in anticipation of the sequester coming into effect.

We saw it in New Hampshire, in some of our businesses that are dependent on government contracts, particularly in the defense industry. So our failure to act is not only irresponsible, but it is beginning to have a real impact in slowing down this economy.

It is simply unacceptable that we are not addressing this issue. We need to act. If we let the sequester go into effect, we stand to lose, according to the Congressional Budget Office, up to 1.4 million jobs. A recent forecast from Macroeconomic Advisers suggests that sequestration would reduce our gross domestic product by .7 percentage points this year.

We can't risk putting our economic recovery in jeopardy with these indiscriminate cuts. They are going to have an impact on research and education vital to our ability to grow this economy and remain competitive.

The National Institutes of Health would face a \$2.5 billion cut. They would have to halt or curtail scientific research, including needed research in cancer and childhood diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would see a \$464 million cut. States and local communities would lose billions of Federal education funding for title I, for special education grants, and for other programs.

As many as 100,000 children will lose their places in Head Start, 25,000 teachers could lose their jobs, and we will see those impacts immediately in Maine and in New Hampshire.

I wish to turn back to the Senator from Maine to share what she is seeing in Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, first I wish to commend the Senator from New Hampshire for broadening the debate and reminding all of us of the macroeconomic impact, as well as the impact on our two States.

The estimate is that Maine's defense industry—which includes not just the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Bath Iron Works, and our Pratt & Whitney plant, but a lot of smaller contractors and suppliers—could lose as many as 4,000 jobs as a result of sequestration. Think about that. That means, as the Senator from New Hampshire pointed out, these are people who are supporting their families and who are supporting other businesses in the community. The impact, the ripple effect, is just devastating.

That is why it does not surprise me that the Congressional Budget Office has pointed to sequestration as the primary cause for the slow growth we have seen already, and CBO projects as well; that our economy would grow at a faster rate—at 2 percent—if we averted sequestration. These aren't meaningless numbers. They affect real people. The estimates are that we would lose between 1.4 million and 2 million jobs if this is allowed to go into effect nationwide.

It is also a failure on the part of Washington to make decisions. If we are going to allow these mindless, indiscriminate cuts to go into effect, why are we here? We might as well have computers or robots making decisions for us. Our job is to do the hard, painful work of setting priorities and making decisions. That is why I am so frustrated by the approach we appear to be on the verge of taking.

The Senator from New Hampshire makes a very important point. While the Department of Defense would take a disproportionate impact from sequestration, and I am extremely concerned about that, there are other important programs that would be affected as well. The superintendents groups have met with me and talked about what it

would mean for schoolchildren in Maine if halfway through the school year—more than halfway through the school year—all of a sudden they get a reduction in title I money that goes to low-income schools, to special education grants, to other important programs such as Head Start, and the TRIO Program, which helps low-income and first-generation students attend and excel in college.

Think about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, biomedical research that is so critical, cuts in the FAA workforce that could reduce air traffic control, disrupting air traffic during the busy summer months.

The list goes on and on: essential education, health care, research, transportation programs that deserve support that do not deserve to all be treated the same.

Again, I want to emphasize that we recognize spending must be cut and the debt, at \$16.4 trillion, is way out of control. That amounts to something like \$52,000 for each man, woman, and child in this country.

We are committed to seeking pragmatic solutions through compromise and to avoiding this devastation of our economy and our national security. We recognize we have to look at all areas of spending and that we need to overhaul our Tax Code and make it more pro-growth, simpler, and fairer. If ever there were a moment when Members of Congress and the President should put aside their politics for the greater good of the Nation, now is the time.

So I, for one, want to thank the Senator from New Hampshire for caring so much about this issue. We have agreed to work together—and continue to work together—to address this. These automatic cuts were never supposed to take effect. I remember being told: Do not worry. It is never going to happen. It is too unpalatable. It will just never occur.

Well, they were supposed to force us to make the difficult decisions necessary to put our economy on a sound footing and to deal with our unsustainable debt. Our Nation's leaders—the President, Democrats and Republicans alike—have denounced sequestration for the most part, and yet here we are.

So I hope we can work together to avoid this fiscal cliff which will have such damaging effects for the people of this Nation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator COLLINS very much for her kind words. I know we both care a great deal about this situation we are in, as I think most of the Members of the body do. What is so frustrating is that it is avoidable. This is not something that has to happen because we are facing a crisis. This is happening because of what we have done in our actions. So we can undo these actions, as the Senator points out.

I share the Senator's belief that we need a comprehensive solution. We

have to look at all aspects of the budget. We need to look at domestic, defense spending, mandatory programs, and we need to look at revenues. Comprehensive tax reform—that is a way we can address that.

There are areas of bipartisan agreement that we ought to be able to take action on right away. We have had a number of GAO reports that make recommendations on duplicative programs within government. We are already working to control the long-term costs of health care, to close tax loopholes, and on defense spending, we all know there are still reforms that can be done, as the Senator pointed out. We can get better physical controls. We can end some of the fraud and abuse in contracting. That is just the beginning of a list that, I am sure, if we all dedicated ourselves to coming up with a compromise on how we avoid the sequester, we could do.

We should not delay because our failure to resolve this issue is having damaging effects on our economy, and it is only going to get worse if we do not find the solution.

So, again, I thank Senator COLLINS for her commitment to address this challenge we face, for her willingness to come down and engage with me, and for us to work together, along with our colleagues, to try to get a resolution so we do not have these devastating cuts going into effect.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator would yield for one moment, without losing his right to the floor.

Mr. INHOFE. Yes, I will.

Mr. LEVIN. Before the Senators from New Hampshire and Maine leave the floor, I just want to commend them for their statements, for their conversation. It is so critically important we avoid sequester. The more Senators and the more Members of the House who look for ways on a bipartisan basis to avoid it, the better. We only have 2 weeks left to go. With the kind of energy and creativity that these two Senators bring to this body, it makes me a little bit more hopeful that we are going to be able to avoid this unbelievably bad outcome.

So I just want to thank both Senators and thank my friend from Oklahoma for yielding for a moment.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me, first of all, respond to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. I agree. We have talked about the anguish.

We had a hearing yesterday where the service chiefs discussed the disaster facing our armed forces if we go through sequestration. I do not think most Members of this body fully understand what it means, not just to the defense of our country as a whole, but to each of the individual States.

In my State of Oklahoma, I am very concerned about Tinker Air Force Base

and its 16,000 civilian employees. What is going to happen there?

Anyway, let me just wind up this part by saying I have been ranked as the most conservative Member for many years. But I have always said: I am a big supporter of using our resources in two areas: One is national defense and the other is transportation and infrastructure.

A short while ago, the majority leader was kind enough to call my office and tell me I would be objecting to the consideration of the nomination of former Senator Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

However, this is not a filibuster. I keep getting stopped by people out in the hall: Oh, we are going to filibuster. Who is going to filibuster?

What we are doing is not a filibuster. We are seeking a 60 vote threshold for a controversial nomination. If the majority really wanted to move forward quickly, all they have to do is agree to a 60-vote margin, like they did with the Sebelius and Bryson nominations.

In addition, as ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am obligated to assist the members of the committee.

First of all, the vote in the committee was a 100-percent partisan vote. Every Republican there voted against moving the Hagel nomination out of committee. Well, there has to be a reason for that.

One of the reasons—the major reason, I would say—and if you do not believe this, go back and look at the tape of the meeting yesterday where many of our members said: Why is it we are rushing to confirm Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense when he has not given us the information we have requested? One such Member is the junior Senator from Texas, who is in the Chamber with me right now.

But let me first clarify there is nothing unusual about requesting a 60-vote threshold. This happens all the time. I can remember when the majority leader agreed to a 60-vote threshold in the 2009 nomination of Kathleen Sebelius. She was confirmed.

There is nothing unusual about a 60-vote threshold.

John Bryson was nominated to be the Secretary of Commerce. Several of us had concerns about this nomination. Ultimately, he was confirmed. But once again the entire Senate agreed to a confirmation vote by a 60-vote margin.

I can remember when the majority leader—let me say this about the majority leader. He has been exceptionally good to me on things I have been involved in. I have two major bills that were my bills. One was in concert with BARBARA BOXER—the highway bill. Frankly, I could not have gotten it passed without them. Another was my pilots' bill of rights. I could not get a hearing on it in committee. I tried for a year. He stepped in and helped me. I have said in national publications I could not have gotten it passed with-

out Leader HARRY REID. So we have a very good relationship, and one which will continue.

However, Senator REID, on numerous occasions, was concerned about Republican nominations. During the Bush Presidency, Stephen Johnson—who, incidentally, was a Democrat—was nominated to be EPA Administrator. I thought he would be good Administrator. There were several Democrats who thought he would not be good Administrator. So HARRY REID did what he is supposed to do, and he interceded on behalf of the Democrats who opposed him. As result, cloture was filed and, therefore, the nomination needed 60 votes to proceed. Well, the Administrator got 61 votes.

Another example was Dirk Kempthorne. He was nominated to be Secretary of the Interior. My colleagues will remember he is a former Senator from Idaho. Some objected to his confirmation. Of course, this was during the Bush administration. Senator Kempthorne was nominated, and he went ahead and was confirmed. It was a 60-vote margin. There is nothing unusual about this.

Getting back to Stephen Johnson, this is even more analogous to what we have right now because he was a Democrat who was nominated by a Republican President. Unfortunately, once again we were forced by the Democrats to have a cloture vote which requires 60 votes.

Stephen Johnson was a Democrat. So here we had the Republicans wanting Stephen Johnson and the Democrats not wanting Stephen Johnson. It is very analogous to what we have today. Today, we have former Senator Chuck Hagel, who is a Republican.

But in this case, we have a situation where cloture has been filed by the majority leader. I have no objection to voting. I do not want to wait. I do not want to string this out. I have other places to go other than hanging around here. I would vote tonight if we could just get the information that has been requested by the Republican members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Keep in mind, the Hagel nomination was reported out of committee by a 100-percent partisan vote. All Republicans voted against sending him out. Why did they do it? They did it because we have not gotten the information we want.

I have a letter. This is a letter that is signed by 25 Republicans stating that we have not received the information necessary for a proper vetting of the Hagel nomination.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent it be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 6, 2013.

The Hon. CHUCK HAGEL,
Distinguished Professor in the Practice of National Government, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HAGEL, On January 29, two days before your confirmation hearing, you received a request, via email, from several Senators on the Senate Armed Services Committee for additional information necessary to fairly assess your nomination to be Secretary of Defense. The written copy of the letter (delivered the next day) was signed by six Senators, including the Ranking Member of the Committee. The letter requested that you respond to the request before the hearing, so that you could then answer questions concerning your responses.

You declined to respond to the request for additional financial disclosure.

At the hearing, you were told by Members of the Committee that a response to our request for information would be necessary before the Committee could vote on your nomination. The Chairman of the Committee expressly asked you to submit your response by Monday, February 4.

Monday came and went, and you still did not respond.

At the end of the day on Tuesday, February 5, you submitted a short "response" to our request. In that response, you explicitly declined to answer many of the questions asked of you.

You were asked to disclose all compensation over \$5,000 that you have received over the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the Atlantic Council has received foreign funding in the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—McCarthy Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Corsair Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Wolfensohn and Company has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—M.I.C. Industries has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the National Interest Security Company has received foreign funding in the ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Elite Training and Security, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Kaseman, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

Your own financial records are entirely within your own control, and you have flatly refused to comply with the Committee Members' request for supplemental information.

The records from the other firms—more than one of which, you have disclosed, paid you \$100,000 or more—are highly relevant to the proper consideration of your nomination. Your letter discloses no affirmative efforts on your part to obtain the needed disclosure, and your lack of effort to provide a substantive response on this issue is deeply troubling.

If it is the case that you personally have received substantial financial remuneration—either directly or indirectly—from foreign governments, sovereign wealth funds,

lobbyists, corporations, or individuals, that information is at the very minimum relevant to this Committee's assessment of your nomination. Such remuneration may be entirely appropriate, but that determination cannot be made without disclosure.

If you have not received remuneration—directly or indirectly—from foreign sources, then proper disclosure will easily demonstrate that fact.

Your refusal to respond to this reasonable request suggests either a lack of respect for the Senate's responsibility to advise and consent or that you are for some reason unwilling to allow this financial disclosure to come to light.

This Committee, and the American people, have a right to know if a nominee for Secretary of Defense has received compensation, directly or indirectly, from foreign sources. Until the Committee receives full and complete answers, it cannot in good faith determine whether you should be confirmed as Secretary of Defense.

Therefore, in the judgment of the undersigned, a Committee vote on your nomination should not occur unless and until you provide the requested information.

Sincerely,

(Signed by 26 Senators).

Mr. INHOFE. This letter is signed by several Senators, but it was promoted, more than by anyone else, by the Senator from Texas. The Senator has repeatedly requested this information. I have personally heard Senator CRUZ request this information, just yesterday, and on several previous occasions.

In a previous letter, he said: We express our concern—several Senators also signed this letter—on the unnecessary rush to force through a vote on Chuck Hagel's nomination before he has been able to respond adequately to multiple requests from members of the Armed Services Committee for additional information.

I'm reading now from the letter: Those requests have included a request to Chuck Hagel for the disclosure of his personal compensation he has received over the past 5 years.

We are talking about Chuck Hagel.

This is information which he controls. He can provide this information. It is there.

The letter also requests the disclosure of foreign funds he may have received indirectly. This is important because some have raised questions of a potential conflict of interest.

Why does he not want to disclose this? Somehow he would like to be confirmed without disclosing this information.

As Senators we have a responsibility here. I do not care if you are a Democrat or Republican. If a member of the Armed Services Committee requests this information and the information is available and he is able to obtain it and does not provide it, we have a process problem.

Mr. President, my primary objection to Chuck Hagel's confirmation is for policy reasons. That is why I think he is not qualified for that job. Others do not agree with that. That is fine. But they have to agree on the process.

In fact, I cannot remember—and I have been on the Armed Services Com-

mittee in both the House and Senate for 25 years. I do not remember one time when information that was requested, which was perfectly within the purview of the committee was not provided. This has not happened. This is unprecedented.

I heard some people say: you are filibustering a Cabinet appointee. That is not what we are doing. What we are trying to prevent is an unprecedented event where committee members do not receive information which is important for Members to have in order to consider a nomination.

So I will continue to read the letter.

The letter includes a request for a complete list of his prior public speeches, notably, multiple additional speeches on controversial topics that have been made public by the press.

For example, I understand FOX News is going to run a story tomorrow regarding some speeches made by former Senator Hagel. If so, these speeches would certainly give rise to a lot of interest because, I have been informed, we are talking about speeches which were made and paid for by foreign governments. I have also been told, some of these foreign governments may not be friendly to us.

Therefore, I believe Senators are entitled to review this information. Are we entitled to that? Yes; we are entitled to that.

So this letter includes a request for a complete list of his prior public speeches, notably, additional speeches on controversial topics that have been made public in the press, despite those speeches having been omitted from his own disclosure.

I remember in the early stages of the confirmation process, requests were made of Senator Hagel about information we knew existed because the press had written about it in the past. Some may argue that Senators are not entitled to review these speeches. I disagree. A member of the Armed Services Committee has a responsibility to review that information.

The letter also makes the critical request from the administration for additional information on their precise actions during and immediately following the tragic murder of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012.

Regardless, if the administration has answered these questions, the Senate is entitled to review speeches that have been made by the person who is up for confirmation to be Secretary of Defense.

I would say to the majority leader, the request for a 60 vote threshold is based on precedent. It is what the majority leader agreed to on the John Bryson and Kathleen Sebelius nominations. It is what he insisted upon when the Democrats forced cloture to be filed on the Dirk Kempthorne and Stephen Johnson nominations. There are several others. Michael Leavitt was one. John Bolton went through this twice. We all remember Miguel

Estrada. We remember ROBERT PORTMAN, now one of our fellow Senators.

So there is nothing unusual about this. But there is a problem with the process we are entering now. That process is, we have made requests—I am talking about Members such as Senator CRUZ from Texas and other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee who have made perfectly reasonable requests for information. In this case, it is on speeches reportedly made to foreign audiences. However, these concerns can be clarified in a matter of minutes.

That is why we should not rush. If this information is provided we could resolve this matter tonight. The information is out there. I have personally talked to Senator CRUZ. He said: Look, if they will just give us that information we have been requesting now for weeks, we can have the vote tonight.

That is our reasonable request. We are not talking about merits. We are not talking about substance. We are talking about a process. Never before in my memory has a Senate Armed Services member's reasonable request been denied before someone has come up for a confirmation. It is a simple request. It has been done on a regular basis. A 60-vote margin is not a filibuster. We are merely saying the Senate is entitled to this information. Hopefully, this will jar some of the information loose. Maybe we can get it now. I hope we do.

I want to move this on and move it as rapidly as possible.

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. WHITEHOUSE. 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. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here again to talk about the effects of climate change on the health of our families and our communities. Just as we know that secondhand smoke and too much sun exposure are bad for human health, we know pollution and variations in climate conditions are as well.

I wish to thank our chairman on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Mrs. BOXER, for the briefing she held today with a number of scientists, including one who spoke specifically about the human health effects we can see from climate change. Climate change is threatening to erode the improvements in air quality we have achieved through the Clean Air Act.

EPA-enforced emissions reductions have led to a decline in the number and