

[Rollcall Vote No. 199 Ex.]

## YEAS—55

|            |              |             |
|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Baldwin    | Heitkamp     | Pryor       |
| Begich     | Hirono       | Reed        |
| Bennet     | Johnson (SD) | Reid        |
| Blumenthal | Kaine        | Rockefeller |
| Booker     | King         | Sanders     |
| Boxer      | Klobuchar    | Schatz      |
| Brown      | Landrieu     | Schumer     |
| Cantwell   | Leahy        | Shaheen     |
| Cardin     | Levin        | Stabenow    |
| Carper     | Manchin      | Tester      |
| Coons      | Markey       | Udall (CO)  |
| Donnelly   | McCaskill    | Udall (NM)  |
| Durbin     | Menendez     | Walsh       |
| Feinstein  | Merkley      | Warner      |
| Franken    | Mikulski     | Warren      |
| Gillibrand | Murphy       | Whitehouse  |
| Hagan      | Murray       | Wyden       |
| Harkin     | Nelson       |             |
| Heinrich   | Paul         |             |

## NAYS—43

|           |              |           |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Alexander | Fischer      | Moran     |
| Ayotte    | Flake        | Murkowski |
| Barrasso  | Graham       | Portman   |
| Blunt     | Grassley     | Risch     |
| Boozman   | Hatch        | Roberts   |
| Burr      | Heller       | Rubio     |
| Chambliss | Hoeven       | Scott     |
| Coats     | Inhofe       | Sessions  |
| Coburn    | Isakson      | Shelby    |
| Collins   | Johanns      | Thune     |
| Corker    | Johnson (WI) | Toomey    |
| Cornyn    | Kirk         | Vitter    |
| Crapo     | Lee          | Wicker    |
| Cruz      | McCain       |           |
| Enzi      | McConnell    |           |

## NOT VOTING—2

|       |         |
|-------|---------|
| Casey | Cochran |
|-------|---------|

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE,  
AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

## CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 428, H.R. 4660, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara Mikulski, Richard J. Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, Tim Kaine, Richard Blumenthal, Robert P. Menendez, Debbie Stabenow, Christopher Murphy, Patrick J. Leahy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Tom Harkin, Tom Udall, Christopher A. Coons, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum

call has been waived. The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 428, H.R. 4660, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 95, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 200 Leg.]

## YEAS—95

|            |              |             |
|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Alexander  | Gillibrand   | Murphy      |
| Ayotte     | Graham       | Murray      |
| Baldwin    | Grassley     | Nelson      |
| Barrasso   | Hagan        | Portman     |
| Begich     | Harkin       | Pryor       |
| Bennet     | Hatch        | Reed        |
| Blumenthal | Heinrich     | Reid        |
| Blunt      | Heitkamp     | Risch       |
| Booker     | Hirono       | Roberts     |
| Boozman    | Hoeven       | Rockefeller |
| Boxer      | Inhofe       | Rubio       |
| Brown      | Isakson      | Sanders     |
| Burr       | Johanns      | Schatz      |
| Cantwell   | Johnson (SD) | Schumer     |
| Cardin     | Johnson (WI) | Scott       |
| Carper     | Kaine        | Sessions    |
| Chambliss  | King         | Shaheen     |
| Coats      | Kirk         | Shelby      |
| Coburn     | Klobuchar    | Stabenow    |
| Collins    | Landrieu     | Tester      |
| Coons      | Leahy        | Thune       |
| Corker     | Levin        | Toomey      |
| Cornyn     | Manchin      | Udall (CO)  |
| Crapo      | Markey       | Udall (NM)  |
| Cruz       | McCain       | Vitter      |
| Donnelly   | McCaskill    | Walsh       |
| Durbin     | McConnell    | Warner      |
| Enzi       | Menendez     | Warren      |
| Feinstein  | Merkley      | Whitehouse  |
| Fischer    | Mikulski     | Wicker      |
| Flake      | Moran        | Wyden       |
| Franken    | Murkowski    |             |

## NAYS—3

|        |     |      |
|--------|-----|------|
| Heller | Lee | Paul |
|--------|-----|------|

## NOT VOTING—2

|       |         |
|-------|---------|
| Casey | Cochran |
|-------|---------|

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 95, the nays are 3. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

## NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise to speak to the 42 very well-qualified and very patient nominees who, through no fault of their own and certainly no fault of the Foreign Relations Committee and no fault of their records of service to this Nation that have been established, are trapped on the executive calendar, unable to assume their appointed posts because the Republican leadership has chosen ob-

structionism as a political tool. They have consciously chosen the strategy to do nothing, pass nothing, approve nothing, and leave, most importantly in my view, key diplomatic posts unfilled for months, threatening in many cases national security and our ability to conduct foreign policy.

Those who say that Congress is broken are wrong. The Congress isn't broken, but if the Republican leadership wants you to believe it is, they use every parliamentary tool to make certain, among other posts, we cannot fill key foreign policy positions. And the world waits, American foreign policy waits, diplomacy waits, and our allies wait to let these nominees and their families have some closure and get to work.

The blame for these posts being left vacant with these people being in political limbo rests squarely on the shoulders of the Republican leadership. It is not a problem with Congress or the Democrats or the President or with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Never, to my knowledge, has this body as a political strategy obstructed en masse the appointments of non-controversial career Foreign Service officers who have worked for both Democratic and Republican administrations. Never.

Never have we held up appointments to so many ambassadorial positions, State Department positions, USAID positions, and representatives to the multilateral development banks. Eighteen of the forty-two pending nominees are ambassadors who would fill important posts in the Czech Republic, Bosnia, Albania, Gabon, Mauritania, Cameroon, Niger, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, and Kuwait. Nearly 20 percent—20 percent—of our total ambassadorial presence in Africa is being held up by the Republican leadership. All of them have waited on average 280 days—280 days—for Senate action. That is unfair to them. It is unfair to their families. It is bad policy. It is unnecessary, irresponsible, and completely unacceptable. And it has to end. It harms our regional coordination on issues such as food, security, and counterterrorism.

We are seeing what is happening across Africa, particularly northern Africa, and we have a challenge. We have a challenge that involves our national interests and our national security. You cannot promote the solutions to those challenges if you don't have an ambassador on the ground in those countries. Let us remember that U.S. leadership plays a major role in supporting peace and security efforts alongside our development, democracy, and humanitarian goals across Africa and around the world, preventing us from being able to project power and leadership, leaving us—in my view—vulnerable from a national security standpoint.

In West Africa, the Nigerian terrorist organization Boko Haram is perpetuating a brutal campaign of violence

and fear, kidnapping young women and taking advantage of porous borders with Niger and Cameroon. The United States is leading an effort with our international partners to improve regional coordination to address both this threat and serious development challenges in the region.

Unfortunately, the Senate has yet to confirm the ambassadorial nominees to Niger or Cameroon. We need to fill these ambassadorial positions in order to promote our interests and our coordination in the region in pursuit of some of these goals.

Mauritania has been a key partner in addressing the terrorist threat posed by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQIM, in Africa's volatile Sahel region.

Let's not forget that the East African Nation of Djibouti holds U.S. Africa Command's Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa and is the U.S. military's only enduring infrastructure in Africa, Camp Lemonnier, home to some 4,000 U.S. servicemembers and civilians.

Our cooperation with Djibouti supports counterterrorism efforts against Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in nearby Yemen and anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. Al-Shabaab recently carried out its first terrorist attack in Djibouti, targeting a restaurant frequented by westerners. Yet our ambassadorial nominee, Thomas Kelly, remains unconfirmed.

In addition to supporting peace and security efforts in Africa, the United States also plays a key role supporting democratic governance across the continent, which in turn contributes to greater stability.

Niger and Namibia are set to hold Presidential elections within the next 9 months and both ambassadorial nominees have yet to be confirmed by the full Senate.

At a time when stability in parts of Africa is tenuous, at best, with conflicts, famine, and the ever-increasing threat from criminal and terrorist organizations, it is simply not in our national interest to have the President's nominees—many of them career Foreign Service officers—in many cases held up for political reasons for nearly a year—a year in so many cases.

U.S. leadership in international organizations is being negatively affected. In fact, the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs was reported to the Senate on March 3. Her nomination is not the least bit controversial, and yet she has not been confirmed.

Nominees for posts at the United Nations have been pending for months, including the nominee to be U.S. Representative to the U.N. Conference on Disarmament, who was reported out on March 11. These gaps have affected our credibility around the world, and they are affecting U.S. national security.

It is worth understanding that this list is not static. We are constantly

adding nominees to the Executive Calendar. We held hearings for an additional five nominees last week. Four more had their hearings today, chaired by Senator CARDIN—who is here on the floor with me and has done an exceptional job in this regard—including our nominees to be ambassador to Korea and Vietnam. Simply stated, the backlog is weakening America's role in the world.

The vast majority of these nominees are uncontroversial. They have passed committee by voice vote, not even a recorded vote, and are nominations that normally would have gone through the Senate en bloc by unanimous consent. Holding them hostage is simply wrong on every level.

Never has one party stood in the way of full and complete conduct of foreign policy, and it is time the American people understand who is to blame for the dysfunction that is holding them hostage for political reasons. And as we hold up action on these nominees, the world is convulsing. The days are filled with a steady stream of breaking-news stories, disheartening images, trending tweets of reports of unrest in Ukraine, Iraq, Venezuela; mass atrocities in Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic; heart-wrenching accounts of kidnapped girls in Nigeria and alarming events of violence against women in Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world. That is the daily diet of what we see unfolding across the world.

American leadership is expected by the international community during this challenging period, and it is in fact something that is in our own national interests and national security interests.

Some complain that the United States does too much and others argue that we don't do enough, but always the debate in foreign affairs is centered on our Nation and the vital role we fill within the international system. We live in a new world defined by technological advancement and rapid globalization, but we are history-bound by a deeply imbued duty to provide moral clarity when it appears lacking, of serving as a lighthouse to a community of nations undergoing profound transformation.

In one very particular arena, we are failing this charge. We are leaving our embassies without the tools they need, without the necessary leadership to pick up that metaphorical hammer.

Using obstruction as a political tool, we are being forced to turn from our vital responsibility of confirming ambassadorial nominees to conduct American foreign policy. That means turning from our responsibility in everything from providing emergency services for Americans abroad to responding to humanitarian crises around the world, to supporting U.S. businesses and our commerce agenda overseas. The lack of confirmed ambassadors is crippling our global agenda.

Consider this: Key U.S.-held positions at the World Bank, International

Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and other international financial institutions are not filled.

Seizing the opportunity, Russia and China are actively lobbying IMF members to reduce U.S. ownership share in the bank. Just recently, Christine Lagarde, IMF managing director said: "I wouldn't be surprised if one of these days the IMF was headquartered in Beijing."

No nation can hear what we have to say if we are not there, if we have no voice. It is not an overstatement to say our national security is affected by Republican noncooperation. One example is the Assistant Secretary of State for Verification, Compliance, and Implementation tasked with monitoring and verifying our arms control agreements remains empty, and that affects our ability to design and implement a potential agreement to halt Iran's illicit nuclear weapons program.

Last week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing for the nominees to serve in Egypt, Iraq, and Qatar. Imagine those countries not having a U.S. ambassador during a time when they are going through massive turmoil and change—some of them, not all of them, but Iraq is certainly going through turmoil. We will soon vote to approve these Foreign Service officers, but there is no guarantee they will be confirmed expeditiously by the Senate despite the very obvious need for a constant U.S. presence in these Nations. Iraq is on the verge of civil war and we have no way to confirm Stu Jones, a very qualified nominee who is currently serving in Jordan for the post to replace Robert Beecroft, who is headed to Egypt but is currently in Iraq.

That this scenario is even a possibility, given their pending assignments, concerns me and should concern all of us. Perhaps their fate will be similar to the nominee to Kuwait, who has not received a confirmation vote for nearly 200 days.

The Emir of Kuwait recently made a historic visit to Iran. Persistent reports link wealthy Kuwaiti donors to a variety of extremists, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—the ISIS, which is threatening Iraq. Yet we lack the ambassador's ears and eyes on the ground to provide the analysis we need.

Of the 42 unconfirmed nominees, almost half are career ambassadors, who, as I said earlier, have served this Nation for a lifetime on behalf of Democratic and Republican administrations. Some were already confirmed, as I said earlier, in the past by the Senate and served as ambassadors in previous posts.

So let me conclude by saying since becoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we have debated and voted to approve 125 nominees, oftentimes unanimously and without discord.

But apparently the pricetag for Leader REID executing what some call the nuclear option to get anything done in the Senate is the Republican leadership's intransigence that gums up the Senate proceedings, particularly holding ambassadorial nominees hostage and in so doing harming our national security objectives. This standoff is having very negative and real implications in the world that is beset by chaos and in need of American engagement. It has to end and it has to end now.

It is not about a Republican or a Democratic divide in terms of importance. This is about the national interests and security of the United States. If we are not in our embassies abroad as a leader, we can do all the diplomacy and efforts from the State Department, but at the end of the day the person on the ground every day and engaging with the leadership of that country and promoting American ideals, values, and interests is the ambassador. In the absence of an ambassador, we cannot be heard. I don't want the United States not to be heard.

I see my colleague from Maryland, a distinguished member of the committee who has held so many of these hearings for nominees and has done a fantastic job on behalf of the committee. He is going to speak next. As the chair of one of our key subcommittees, it is critical, as you will hear from him, that we have our nominees so our interests can be represented.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, first, I thank Senator MENENDEZ for his incredible leadership on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. What Senator MENENDEZ did not bring out is the number of hours our committee has had hearings on each one of these nominees.

We take the nomination process very seriously—the committee does—under Senator MENENDEZ's leadership. We have a complete record on the background and experience of each of President Obama's nominees. We have vetted them, gone over everything, and we have had hearings.

As Senator MENENDEZ pointed out, today I chaired a hearing where we considered the nominations for our Ambassadors to Algeria, Vietnam, and the Republic of Korea as well as an Assistant Administrator for USAID for Asia. That hearing lasted an hour and a half, many questions were asked. The record is open through Thursday so members of the committee can ask additional questions.

Many times additional questions are asked for the record. We get those responses, and we then analyze all of that information and go to a committee markup where every member of the committee has a chance to debate each nominee. As Senator MENENDEZ has pointed out, in most cases they have been approved by our committee

by unanimous votes, and many times it is not recorded because there is no controversy.

In many cases these are career diplomats, and in other cases they are people who have an extraordinary background to add to the service of their country, and we are very blessed that they are willing to step forward to take on the ambassadorship or membership in a key national organization to further U.S. foreign policy. That is the record.

So what happens after we act? Senator MENENDEZ has expedited these nominations as quickly as he could do it in carrying out the responsibilities of the Senate to advise on these nominations. But what has happened afterward is that they cannot get a Senate vote and not because of any meritorious objections to the confirmation. They are just being backlogged in order to gum up the operations of the Senate. There is no policy reason or substantive reason for the delay in the consideration of these nominations.

This is foreign policy for the United States. This is in the best interests of the United States. It is hard for the public to understand and it is hard for this Senator to understand why we would hold up having a confirmed ambassador heading up our embassy in any country in the world but particularly those countries that are critically important to U.S. interests. We should have a confirmed head of our embassy in every country.

As far as it is affecting U.S. interests, let me give you what I think is obvious, and the Presiding Officer understands this. Our national defense strategy depends upon not just our soldiers and our weapons, it depends very much on diplomacy and development assistance. The diplomacy—and to a large extent the development assistance—is managed by our embassy in the host country and the CEO of that embassy is the confirmed ambassador, and in many cases we don't have a confirmed ambassador. We don't have an ambassador because the Senate has not confirmed that position.

For months we have gone without confirming an ambassador after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has recommended a confirmation, and that is why we have come to the floor to talk about that. This does affect our national security interests.

Senator MENENDEZ pointed out a very obvious fact; that is, the face-to-face interchange of our ambassador and the country he or she is representing that gives the United States the best opportunity in that country. That is how you do diplomacy. You don't do diplomacy through letters; you don't do diplomacy through long exchanges from one country to another; you do it by being in that country—by your personal commitment to that country. That is why we have our embassies and our ambassadors. When we don't have a confirmed ambassador—when we don't have the CEO of that embassy there—

we miss that personal face-to-face interchange which is critically important.

Just think for a moment. Here we are trying to make an important contact in a foreign country, and we may meet with the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister, and we don't have an ambassador to be our representative or to be there to supervise the diplomacy that is taking place.

What many people are not aware of is that our embassies are more than just the ambassador dealing with current foreign policy issues. We have a host of functions that are carried out under the supervision of our ambassador who, as we pointed out in many cases, is not there because we have not acted. Maybe we are interested in what is going on with U.S. business. We have a lot of economic interests around the world.

We are in a global economy. American businesses depend upon our embassy being there for them to fight for the government contracts on a fair, level playing field so they can conduct their business internationally. They depend upon an embassy to be at full strength. Because of global competition, we are fighting every day for job opportunities for Americans and American companies.

In too many countries we don't have that person there fighting for our businesses because the Senate is not active because those on the other side of the aisle have prevented us from taking up these ambassadors for confirmation, even though there has been no controversy surrounding their individual confirmation, and that is hurting U.S. business interests.

There are many citizens who travel abroad. They expect to have the full service of their embassy if they need it or if they get sick or they need the services of our embassy for whatever it might be. They depend on that embassy, and they want the CEO to be present in that embassy in order to fight for their interests.

That confirmed ambassador is not there today because the Republicans have denied the vote in the Senate to confirm that position. We are not at full strength to protect Americans who are traveling abroad. Our participation in environmental opportunities is very much dependent upon the functioning of our embassy.

Our humanitarian efforts depend upon the functioning of the embassy. Our eyes and ears on the ground depend upon the functioning of the embassy. Our development assistance programs are run out of the embassies. In many cases the CEO is not there because of the obstruction by the Republicans in the Senate who are not allowing a vote on noncontroversial nominees. Because these nominations have not taken place, we are not at full strength.

We are hurting our country. We are hurting our interests. We are hurting our business interests, our security interests, and our leadership on environmental issues. As Senator MENENDEZ

pointed out, they are not just ambassadors to countries, they are ambassadors to international organizations.

We are not at full strength on economic international organizations. We are not at full strength on arms control negotiations because we don't have our key person there—not because that person is controversial, not because the President has elected someone who is controversial but to the contrary. Almost all of these nominations are non-controversial and waiting for months because the Republicans will not allow a vote.

Somebody said: OK. Don't we need a lot of floor time to debate this? Look at the record. Look how much floor debate has been spent on approving these nominations. I am willing to wager—although we can't wager on the floor of the Senate. I am willing to point out that if we bring these nominations to floor consideration, in almost every case there will be virtually no debate, and they will be approved by an overwhelming majority, if not a unanimous vote.

We are hurting our country. We are hurting the reputation of the United States. We are supposedly the major power. Yet we can't get a CEO confirmed to head our embassies abroad.

It is also unfair to the people who are making a sacrifice for public service. As Senator MENENDEZ pointed out, a large number of these nominees were ambassadorships or career diplomats. These are not political appointments, these are career people who have made their career serving their country.

Many have young families. What do they do about school enrollment in September? Do they enroll their children in the school where they are now or do they wait to see if they will be confirmed and enroll them in the country in which they will be serving? Why are we putting people who are serving their country through that type of uncertainty and anxiety? But we are. We are, by failing to move in a timely way the nominations that have been brought forward to us.

I will just mention one other example. I started with the hearing I chaired today on behalf of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee dealing with four nominees. One was the Ambassador to Vietnam. I was just recently in Vietnam. I met with our current Ambassador, Ambassador Shear. I mention that because he has been nominated to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia, so he is leaving Vietnam. We had a hearing today on the next Ambassador to Vietnam—a well-qualified career diplomat. The question is: Are we going to have the orderly change of command in Vietnam, a country critically important to U.S. interests? We are negotiating a Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. Part of that involves good governance changes that we expect in Vietnam. We expect our Ambassador to be there to negotiate these issues. The question is: Will we have that orderly transfer?

Two career people seeking to move forward in their careers are being held up by inaction on the floor of the Senate.

I come to the last point I wish to make. Yes, we are hurting the United States in not having these confirmed CEOs. It is creating unfairness to the families of people who want to serve our country—and the uncertainty that is there. But it is also hurting the Senate because it is our responsibility to act on Presidential appointments. It is our responsibility to act in a timely, thoughtful way. We are not carrying out that responsibility. By the Republicans obstructing votes on the President's nominations on key foreign policy positions, we are not carrying out our responsibility—an oath that we took to serve in the Senate to protect the interests of this country. It is our responsibility to act on these nominations in a timely way, and we have not done that because of the obstructionism of the Republicans.

I urge my colleagues to put our national interests first. Let us move forward with our responsibility. The committee has carried out its responsibility and, quite frankly, the chairman has carried that out in a very bipartisan way. We have had cooperation between Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We have carried out our responsibility. Now it is time for the Senate to carry out its responsibility, for the Republicans to allow us to vote in a timely way on this backlog of nominees for critical foreign policy positions. I urge my colleagues to allow us to move forward in the best interests of our country and in respect for those who have stepped forward to serve our country, to carry out the responsibilities we all swore to uphold in the Senate.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, as a sponsor of the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014, I am pleased the Senate has risen to the occasion and come together on this critical leg-

islation. Although I was still in Kansas attending to my family, I would have joined my colleagues in voting aye on Rollcall vote No. 187, a bipartisan plan to help make certain veterans receive the access to quality, timely care they deserve. I will continue to work to address the challenges and problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs so our Nation's heroes have a VA worthy of their service.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO MAJOR MYLE HAMMOND

• Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I wish to honor the service of a great Marine infantryman, Maj. Myle Hammond. Major Hammond will be retiring from the Marine Corps after more than 20 years of dedicated service to our country. On this occasion, I believe it is fitting to recognize his contribution to the Marine Corps, the Senate, and the Nation.

Major Hammond's career included three combat tours in Iraq, a tour with the Ceremonial Honor Guard at Marine Barracks, Washington, 3 years in the Marine Corps Senate Liaison Office, and 1 year working as a congressional fellow in my office. A marine's marine, Myle's distinguished service in combat and in garrison is emblematic of the caliber of his character.

I was proud to welcome Myle into my office, and he exceeded every expectation. His indepth knowledge of the Marine Corps and the legislative process made him an invaluable member of my staff. At the conclusion of his fellowship, Myle moved on to be the deputy director of the Marine Senate Liaison. His quick wit and strategic thinking were vital in guiding the Marine Corps senior leadership through the Senate. His efforts were instrumental in ensuring the completion of the MV-22B acquisition program, executing a responsible drawdown of the Marine Corps, and recognizing the contributions of the first African-American marines through the award of the Congressional Gold Medal in tribute to the Montford Point Marines.

A decorated combat veteran and proud father, Myle is a model American to us all. As Myle hangs up his uniform, he will remain in Virginia with his wife Rani and their two young children, Mason and Sydney. Although his absence will be felt in the Marine Corps and in Congress, I trust that his contributions in the private sector will equal those of his public service.

I share the sentiments of many Senators in my gratitude and appreciation to Major Hammond for his outstanding leadership and his unwavering dedication to the Marine Corps and the country. I wish Myle and his family all the best upon his retirement.●

##### DES MOINES COUNTY, IOWA

• Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its