

400,000 low-income working Americans. She did so in a way that empowered people to take greater responsibility for their own health by providing incentives to use healthcare resources efficiently. The program ensured that many people got health care coverage for the first time. Now this innovative program has become a national model for other States.

Ms. Verma's experience will be invaluable as we work together to improve healthcare across the country and bring down the costs thereof. In addition to her work in Indiana, Ms. Verma has developed several other Medicaid reform programs, including 1,115 Medicaid waivers for Iowa, Ohio, and Kentucky. Her firm helped design Tennessee's coverage expansion proposal and also provided technical assistance to Michigan when the State implemented its Medicaid waiver. She also helped guide the transition of Iowa's Medicaid Program to a managed care program and supported strategy efforts for Maine's Medicaid plan.

Having dealt with CMS in her capacity as a consultant working on these myriad projects, she knows firsthand what is needed to make the programs work effectively. Her job as CMS Administrator will not be easy, and that is a heck of an understatement.

CMS is the world's largest health insurer. It has a budget of over \$1 trillion and processes over 1.2 billion claims a year for services provided to some of our Nation's most vulnerable citizens receiving Medicare and Medicaid. As such, this is a critical agency, and we need a qualified, dedicated leader at the helm. She is certainly that.

In addition to ensuring that Medicare and Medicaid work effectively, Ms. Verma will also be charged with helping to ensure the longevity and solvency of the Medicare trust fund, which is projected to go bankrupt in the year 2028. Maintaining the solvency of the Medicare Program while continuing to provide care for an ever-increasing beneficiary base is going to require creative solutions, skillful administration, and a lot of knowledge and experience.

All told, between now and 2030, 76 million baby boomers will become eligible for Medicare. Even factoring in deaths over that period, the program will grow from approximately 47 million beneficiaries today to roughly 80 million beneficiaries in 2030. This will also create challenges that will require steady leadership and, at times, decisive action.

I believe Ms. Verma is especially qualified to lead CMS and modernize its programs to increase its effectiveness of healthcare delivery. She brings the experience and, importantly, bipartisan solutions that can and should unite people across the political spectrum in addressing some of the greatest challenges in our healthcare system.

Ms. Verma has a keen understanding of patients' needs. She certainly has

the expertise to create a healthcare law that this country needs and improve the lives of the 100 million Americans covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

At a time when the healthcare challenges we face are very real and extremely complex, our Nation needs leaders, like Ms. Verma, who have demonstrated their ability to deliver results.

I know that many people have different ideas about the best direction for the Medicare and Medicaid Programs and how we should meet the complex challenges facing CMS. While we can disagree on policy, we should all agree that the agency needs smart, experienced leadership at its helm.

That being the case, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting Ms. Verma's nomination to this important position. I personally am very grateful that she is willing to dive into this very difficult process and these problems right in the middle of politics being played and that she is willing to do the job America needs at this particular time, especially for those who need healthcare.

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

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

WIRETAPPING ALLEGATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there are a couple of issues that I will speak on, but I was asked earlier this morning about what President Trump has tweeted, basically charging former President Obama with having spied on him in a way that would be plainly illegal. Of course, President Obama's advisers have denied any such thing happened. If it did happen, of course, it would be a grave constitutional issue, and if such a thing did happen, it would be criminal conduct. Now, many people are saying: Well, is it true or not? Was Mr. Trump telling the truth in the tweet or not? There is a very simple response on this. There is one person who knows whether it is true or not, and he has been totally silent on this.

They asked Attorney General Sessions. Attorney General Sessions made it very clear in his confirmation hearing—well, he said a number of things in his confirmation hearing, but one was, of course, that he would be independent. President Trump has leveled very serious charges against former President Obama. I happen to feel the charges are false, but let's have a definitive voice. The Attorney General should have the courage and independence to simply say whether Mr. Trump is telling the truth or not. It is a very simple matter. I would hope that the press and everybody else would keep asking because eventually somebody

has to answer that question, and the Attorney General can.

NOMINATION OF DAVID FRIEDMAN

Mr. President, the Senate will soon consider the nomination of David Friedman to be U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Unlike several of President Trump's other nominees, we know a great deal about Mr. Friedman's views on the challenges he would confront if he were confirmed. Unfortunately, this is because he has made a career of disparaging and inflammatory statements about U.S. policy in the Middle East, about former U.S. officials, about the Palestinians, even about American Jews who have views that differ from his own.

We have all had the opportunity to read articles Mr. Friedman has written. We have heard the outrageous, unfounded verbal attacks he has launched against those who disagree with him. He has written falsely that President Obama and Secretary Kerry engaged in "blatant anti-Semitism," that the liberal American Jews are "far worse than kapos," and that they "suffer a cognitive disconnect in identifying good and evil," that the State Department has a "hundred-year history of anti-Semitism," because diplomats appointed by both Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents have not always seen eye-to-eye on every issue with Israel's leaders. He has said that Israel's policy of "criticizing disloyal Arab citizens while simultaneously bestowing upon them the benefits of citizenship simply isn't working."

Well, those comments alone should disqualify him for this sensitive position, and it is no surprise that tens of thousands of Americans have signed petitions circulated by pro-Israel groups opposing his nomination.

Mr. Friedman has also raised millions of dollars for Israeli settlers, and he has bragged about the effort to remove the two-state solution from the Republican Party's platform, even though Democratic and Republican Presidents have supported it. Regarding the two-state solution, he wrote: "It is more of an illusion that serves the worst intentions of both the United States and the Palestinian Arabs," in one of the many articles he has written for a rightwing Israeli media outlet. That unequivocal renunciation of long-standing U.S. policy should also by itself disqualify him from the job of Ambassador to Israel.

These statements and actions not only indicate his rejection of decades of Republican and Democratic policy. They are the words of someone who makes a mockery of the term "diplomat" and who has demonstrated no ability to be objective and constructive on sensitive issues of immense importance to U.S. security.

Our diplomats are supposed to be representing the American people and the policies of the United States first and foremost. They are not sent to a foreign country to represent the government or people of that country in a

manner that is inconsistent with U.S. policies and U.S. interests. They are there to represent us.

Mr. Friedman is certainly entitled to his own views as a private citizen, even if they are offensive and counter to U.S. interests and values. But can anyone honestly say that this nominee is qualified or suited to represent the American people in Israel?

Five former U.S. Ambassadors to Israel who served under Republican and Democratic Presidents—from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama—are among the thousands of Americans who say that the answer to that question is no.

We are being asked to reconcile Mr. Friedman's record, his personal views, and his deep ties to extreme factions in Israel with his responsibility to objectively advance and defend U.S. interests. Unless one believes, as he has repeatedly made clear he does, that the interests of the United States are always identical to Israel's, there is no way Mr. Friedman should be confirmed.

For as long as I have been in the Senate—and I note that is longer than anybody who is serving here now—I cannot recall a time when we were not at a critical point in our relations with Israel, not because of doubts about the enduring value of the relationship but as a reflection of the importance of the deep partnership between our governments and our people—a deep partnership that we have all supported and that Republican and Democratic Presidents have supported. Most importantly, it is a result of our conviction that security, stability, and prosperity in Israel and the wider region are important to our own national security.

That is why President Obama signed a memorandum of understanding with Israel that included the single largest pledge of U.S. military aid to any country—to any country anywhere in the world, ever—and why both Democratic and Republican administrations have put so much effort into pursuing peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

An alliance as longstanding as ours with Israel, which has far-reaching consequences for the entire Middle East and beyond, requires effective daily management by an experienced diplomat who has not only knowledge of the region but the necessary temperament and appreciation of our country's short- and long-term interests.

I was here when President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin negotiated what was a very difficult peace agreement between the two of them, with both of them putting the interests of the region first. That agreement has lasted. I also remember when Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan—who had fought against each other—personally negotiated a peace agreement, and the United States strongly supported that. In fact, I was privileged to be there when they signed the agreement at Aqaba, as I was present when Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat signed their agreement.

I do not see how anyone could conclude that Mr. Friedman possesses the requisite temperament, nor am I convinced that he appreciates the critical distinction between the interests of our country, the United States, and the parochial interests of an extreme constituency in Israel who he has fiercely advocated for over the course of his long career.

Indeed, it is telling that the spokesman for Beit El, the Israeli settlement that Mr. Friedman has supported financially for years, said its inhabitants would regard him as their representative in the United States. These are Israelis. Their representative in the United States is the Israeli Ambassador. It is not the role of a U.S. Ambassador to represent another country, but that is how Mr. Friedman is perceived in Israel because that is the way he has behaved.

Every U.S. President has understood the importance and the heightened sensitivity of this post, and they chose their nominees accordingly—both Republican and Democratic Presidents—until now. That is why every previous nominee to be Ambassador to Israel has been confirmed by a voice vote or by unanimous consent, while Mr. Friedman was voted out by a narrow 12 to 9—largely party line vote—in the Foreign Relations Committee.

Mr. Friedman's confirmation hearing provided him the opportunity to assuage concerns about his divisiveness, including the many disparaging remarks he has made and his close identification with and support for the Israeli settler movement.

During the hearing he renounced his undiplomatic language, suggesting it was delivered in the heat of the election cycle and in his capacity as a private citizen. In fact, he recanted so much of what he had said—which far predates the election cycle—that Foreign Relations Committee Chairman CORKER asked why he was willing to disavow so much of his past record in order to earn the committee's support.

In response, Mr. Friedman described the role of the U.S. Ambassador to Israel as “the fulfillment of a life's dream, of a life's work, of a life of study of the people, the culture, the politics of Israeli society.”

I would say two things about that. One, I recall a nominee for another position who, when asked questions about extreme positions he had taken for years, started disavowing them all, and I finally asked him: Are you having a confirmation conversion? That nominee—the nominee of a Republican President—when he came before the Senate, was defeated because of Republican votes, as well as Democratic votes.

I always worry about a confirmation conversion. When a nominee rejects years and years of deeply held beliefs during those 2 or 3 days of the confirmation hearing, I wonder how long it will last.

There is an important distinction between knowing and respecting a coun-

try's history and people and believing that one's own personal ambition and that country's interests are inextricably linked. Mr. Friedman's remarkable confirmation conversion falls far short of convincing evidence that changing his title to “Ambassador” will cause him to divorce his life's work and objectively serve the national interests of the United States.

If Mr. Friedman is confirmed, he should immediately untangle his business and personal interests in Israel and commit to being the representative of all Americans—conservative and liberal Jews, conservative and liberal non-Jews—and being a genuine partner in efforts to promote security and stability for Israelis and Palestinians alike, not just because it is in their interests, but because it is in the interest of the United States.

We all want what is best for the American people. We also share a desire to find a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that protects the rights and security of both peoples. Neither goal can be achieved by pursuing policies that further inflame tensions in the region and erode the role of the United States as an honest broker for peace. There are a large number of qualified Americans from both parties who could capably support that role. Mr. Friedman is not among them.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. President, on another matter, this week is Sunshine Week. It is a time when we rededicate ourselves to transparency in government. It is important to all of us. We celebrate one of our Nation's most defining characteristics: that a government of, for, and by the people does not operate in secret. Our democracy depends on an informed public, and it is critical that public officials be truthful with the American people; yet we are not even 2 months into this Presidency, and it is clear that the administration is not meeting that standard.

The Attorney General has yet to come forward and tell us whether the President was telling the truth when he accused President Obama of breaking the law and spying on him, and the President's nominees have shown a real and stunning indifference to the truth. His nominees to lead the Treasury Department, the EPA, HHS, and the Justice Department have all misled Congress while testifying under oath.

I am disturbed that Senate Republicans continue to look the other way. At some point, they must put country over party. But as these new officials take control of their agencies, I remind them that our laws demand an open and transparent government. Last year, Congress took a strong step to reaffirm our commitment to an open government. We passed the FOIA Improvement Act, which is a bipartisan bill. I coauthored it with the deputy Republican leader, Senator CORNYN of Texas. It was the most significant reform to the Freedom of Information Act in