

that Senate offices started using email, so he has helped lead a remarkable technological transformation over these many years. The Senate, and our committee in particular, is very fortunate to have his dedicated service.

Cathy Dugan is the committee's archivist. She has been particularly busy helping the majority staff save and store important papers and other documents from the past 12 years, so that future scholars will have the opportunity to study our work. I know my staff has been particularly appreciative of her patience, her due diligence and her continuous offer of assistance as we've navigated through the archival process.

Letitia Fletcher is a Government Printing Office detailee who has assisted the committee for the past 11 years. She is responsible for the compilation and publication of all the committee's hearings and markups. She is a thorough and dedicated public service employee who was recently recognized by the Public Printer for her 25 years of federal service. I thank her for her contributions to the committee and the Senate.

Two staff assistants recently joined the committee. Kevin Stockert and Phillip Longbrake provide technical and administrative support to the committee staff. They are attentive, professional, and I thank them for their service.

Although she is no longer on staff, I do want to publicly thank our former clerk of the committee, Lynne Seymour, who retired last year. She first joined the committee in the early 1980's, and later became the committee's chief clerk, serving in that capacity for a record 17 years, 7 months. She was an exemplary employee who faced many administrative challenges during her long tenure, including multiple office moves whenever party control of the Senate changed hands. I will also never forget her outstanding leadership during 9/11. At the time, our floor in the Dirksen building was being overhauled and rewired, so our offices, and all our staff, were in temporary trailers in the Russell building courtyard. She managed the ensuring chaotic days with tremendous grace and professionalism.

REPUBLICAN STAFF

Let me also thank the Republican professional staff members of the Budget Committee. They, too, work extremely hard, and have made great contributions to the Senate. My staff and I have always had a very cordial and productive relationship with the Republican committee staff members.

In fact, over the years, I have forged long-lasting personal relationships with many of the Republican staff directors who served during my tenure. Senator Domenici's top aide, Bill Hoagland, is a Washington budget institution, who I have great respect for. Hazen Marshall served under Senator Nickles, and Scott Gudes, Denzel McGuire and Cheri Reidy all served as staff director at various times for Senator Gregg. All of them were a delight to work with. I also appreciate the contributions of the Senator Sessions' Republican staff director, Marcus Peacock, and his current staff.

CONCLUSION

As my colleagues know, there are many staff members who work extremely hard to help the Senate function. That is why I wanted to come to the floor today and offer my thanks and appreciation to the professional staff members who worked tirelessly for me during my tenure of the Budget Committee. They are the ones who worked so hard behind the scenes, content doing the people's business in the background.

I hope my staff members know how much they and their work have meant to me. Each of them has enriched me, both personally and professionally; I am grateful to them.

Mr. CONRAD. I also wish to mention Sara Garland, my chief of staff, an extraordinary person, a North Dakota native, somebody who has dedicated herself to public service; Geri Gaginis, my executive assistant, who has been with me more than 20 years, also a North Dakota native—we call her "mom" in our office because she does a good job of keeping us all on track; Tracee Sutton, legislative director, also a North Dakota native—an exceptional person, she will be on the staff of my succeeding colleague, Senator-elect Heitkamp; Susan King, also a North Dakota native, who has been with me off and on for many years, an outstanding person; Barry Piatt, my communications director, with me here at the end; Mary Jo Prouty, my office manager, still laboring to close down our office; Molly Spaeth, also with me right here to the final days.

I also want to give special recognition to Sean Neary, who was my communications director for many years, who is now the communications director for the Finance Committee, truly an extraordinary person.

With that, Mr. President, I thank Stu Nagurka. Stu is my communications director in the Budget Committee, has stayed with me right to the end, somebody who has an extraordinary record in government service; in fact, served your own Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico, when he was in public service here in Washington. Stu was his communications director and did as everyone knows, an outstanding job.

His son, I want to note, is our page, Jarrod Nagurka, called back into service because in these days, you know, we are a little short of people. They are people for whom I have the highest regard, Stu Nagurka, Jarrod. I mentioned Mary Naylor, my extraordinary staff director; John Righter, the deputy; but I mention and have gone into detail on all of my Budget Committee staff in this statement that I made part of the RECORD.

Finally, let me note that my colleague on the Budget Committee, Senator SESSIONS, is here. Senator SESSIONS has been the ranking Republican. He has been a gentleman. He has been somebody with whom I have enjoyed working. He and his staff have been professional. I think we put on a series of hearings that laid out the issues for our country in a clear and undeniable way.

Again, I leave with only one true regret and that is we were not able collectively to put in place a plan to get our country back on track. But I am not without hope because next year—this year, later this year—we will have more opportunities to do what needs to be done.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, January 2, the majority leader be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the period for morning business be extended until 3 p.m. for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to use as much time as I may consume.

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

THANKING SENATOR CONRAD

Mr. SESSIONS. I am so pleased to see that Senator CONRAD is here, that I could follow him. I had another subject I wanted to speak about, an important subject. But it is very important for all Americans to know how well he has served.

Senator CONRAD is one of the very small group of people in this country who understands the debt challenges we face. He has been on the debt commission. He has been the budget chairman. He staked his first election on dealing with these issues, as he has explained to us. I truly believe if he had a little more support, maybe, from his caucus and others, his vision could have been a real part of the solution we would make to this debt crisis. We are not that far apart when you consider the true challenges this Nation faces financially.

I remember a little over 2 years ago now, when the Senator called the debt commission cochairman, Erskine Bowles before the budget committee. He gave a speech and written testimony, which said this Nation has never faced a more predictable financial crisis. I remember the Senator asked the cochairman when we might have this financial crisis if we don't change our ways. He replied, it could be 2 years, as close as 2 years. That was 2 years ago, over 2 years ago now.

I think, Senator CONRAD, we have maybe gotten a little overconfident. People were telling us we were on an unsustainable course, we were facing a potential crisis, the Rogoff and Reinhart book came out and said that our debt reaches 90 percent of GDP, and all that was discussed and we had a lot of excitement about it, and we did not act. We did not act in a significant way.

In times gone by, maybe people thought the crisis is never going to happen, but I think the Senator agrees the potential for it to happen is just as real, if not more so, than it was 2 years ago.

I want to say this. We did not always agree. The Senator didn't always agree