

General, Dr. Benjamin, as I just mentioned, even when the President declared H1N1 as a national emergency. They blocked a vote on the top Homeland Security official in science and technology, and that was even as the Nation braced for both a flu pandemic and bioterror threats.

The list seems endless. While our sons and daughters are fighting in Iraq and rebuilding that nation, last year Republicans delayed the confirmations of America's Ambassador to Iraq. And while our troops serve bravely in Afghanistan, Republicans delayed the confirmation of LTG Stanley McChrystal, our new commander in that difficult war.

This clearly is not the way the Senate is supposed to work. It is not even the way it typically works. As I have pointed out before, it took only 4 months for President Obama to face as many filibusters of his nominees as President Bush faced in his entire first 4 years. This Republican caucus over here proudly says: We blocked as many of President Obama's nominees in 4 months as you—over here on this side of the aisle—took 4 years to block. Democrats have no interest in playing these games. That is why we did not do what they are doing. No other minority has ever done anything like this before. This is one of a kind.

It would be one thing if Republicans, bound together in unified opposition to everything, as they have made their custom, voted against these vital nominees. It would be one thing if they reviewed their resumes, brought the nominees before the appropriate committees, and decided they were not fit to serve. But that is not what is happening. Instead, simply to waste time, Republicans are refusing to let the Senate vote at all. When these nominees do finally come before this body, you would be surprised—many of them pass unanimously after they have stalled for days and days. You shouldn't be surprised, but it is enough to make you feel uneasy in the stomach that these people who are concerned with the security of our Nation are being stopped from being able to go to work by virtue of the Republican party of no.

These Senators are ignoring their responsibilities to confirm or reject the men and women our Commander in Chief has chosen to help lead this Nation to safety. They are abdicating their responsibility to the American people to keep us safe. They are certainly not putting country first as advertised.

Here is the bottom line: My Republican colleagues are basing their judgment on the political party doing the nominating rather than the person being nominated. This irresponsible partisanship does not merely poison our political system, it endangers our national security.

I have no doubt our friends on the other side realize that when we keep a critical office empty in the Pentagon,

the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, we are not keeping the American people safe. They know what they are doing, and they know what they are doing is dangerous. If they do not, they certainly should. That makes these partisan games all the more disgraceful.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

NOMINATIONS STALLING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week at the State of the Union Address, President Obama laid out the challenges facing America—they are many—and he called on us to rise above partisanship to try to find good solutions for America. I think most Americans agree with that. Oh, there are some Yellow Dog Democrats and some hard-shell Republicans who say: Never compromise, never, but they do not represent the majority of America. The majority of the American people could care less about Democrats and Republicans. They worry about this Nation and its future. They worry about their families, their neighborhoods, their schools, and they wonder why we squabble so much here and spend so much time tied up in knots over arguments that do not make any sense.

I just heard the majority leader describe four individuals who have stepped up when the President asked them to and said: We will serve. Do you know what it means when you say you will serve? It means the FBI looks through every aspect of your life. You fill out lengthy questionnaires, you prepare yourself to go before a committee and be asked questions about every aspect of your life, personal and public. You submit your name to the press to let them look through everything as well. And then you bring your name, of course, to the floor of the Senate, in this case, for final scrutiny. Is there any wonder that a lot of people say: Thanks, but no thanks. I am not interested in doing that. I love my country, but, you know, I value my privacy, and I do not want to go through that hassle. But some have the courage

to step up and say: I will do it if the President asks. I am not going to say no. If my country needs me, I will contribute in any way I can.

Let me give you an example of one of them. His name is Clifford Stanley. He has a 33-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps. He retired in 2002 with the rank of major general. He comes from a family devoted to military service. His father and his brother served in the Army. His daughter is an officer in the Navy. He has a niece in the Air Force. Dr. Clifford Stanley was the first African-American regimental commander in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps.

The President nominated him in October to serve as Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The Armed Services Committee held a hearing in November and reported his nomination to the full Senate on December 2. He came out of the committee without controversy. Is it any wonder? Thirty-three years in the Marine Corps, the first African-American regimental commander in its history, a man who has served his country so well and risked his life for this great Nation, reported by the Armed Services Committee to the full Senate floor in December. We are now in February.

This is a critical post he has been appointed to by the President. He would be in charge of basically managing the readiness of the U.S. Armed Forces. Dr. Stanley would have the responsibility to oversee the National Guard and Reserve. There are 143,000 Americans who are serving in that capacity today in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He would be responsible for the health of the men and women in uniform. The budget the President submitted yesterday includes \$30.9 billion for health care for the members of the military family who are covered by TRICARE. That would be one of Dr. Stanley's responsibilities.

Finally, he is a senior policy adviser on retirement, career development, pay, and benefits. It is a critically important role for our military and our families who really support these military people. And Dr. Stanley is clearly qualified to do it. He has gone through the process of scrutiny and investigation.

Yesterday on the floor of the Senate, when the majority leader asked for permission so that he could go forward and serve our country again in the Department of Defense, the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SHELBY, objected. I would like to hear why. What is it about this man that he objects to? Is there something we do not know about Dr. Stanley? Is there something he knows about his 33 years of service in the Marine Corps? I bet there is not. I bet there is another reason for it. I do not know if we will ever know that. But the fact is, he was objected to. But he was not the only one.

Laura Kennedy is the nominee of the President to serve as U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. That is the way we meet together with the other nations around