

of challenges that are thrown to him. So I want to associate myself with my colleague from Georgia.

Mr. President, I would suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back the remainder of the time and I ask for the yeas and nays.

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

Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Michael H. Simon, of Oregon, to be United States District Judge for the District of Oregon? On this question, the yeas and nays have been ordered, and the clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE).

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

The result was announced—yeas 64, nays 35, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 92 Ex.]

YEAS—64

Akaka	Graham	Murkowski
Alexander	Hagan	Murray
Baucus	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Begich	Inouye	Nelson (FL)
Bennet	Johnson (SD)	Pryor
Bingaman	Kerry	Reed
Blumenthal	Kirk	Reid
Boxer	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Brown (MA)	Kohl	Sanders
Brown (OH)	Kyl	Schumer
Cantwell	Landrieu	Shaheen
Cardin	Lautenberg	Snowe
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Levin	Tester
Collins	Lieberman	Udall (CO)
Conrad	Lugar	Udall (NM)
Coons	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cornyn	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Webb
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Franken	Merkley	Wyden
Gillibrand	Mikulski	

NAYS—35

Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Blunt	Hatch	Portman
Boozman	Heller	Risch
Burr	Hoeven	Roberts
Chambliss	Hutchison	Rubio
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Thune
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Crapo	Lee	Vitter
DeMint	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	

NOT VOTING—1

Ayotte

The nomination was confirmed.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:45 p.m., recessed and reassembled at 2:15 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF LEON E. PANETTA TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Leon E. Panetta, of California, to be Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 hours of debate, equally divided, between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I understand there is a time agreement on this nomination; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct—2 hours of debate, equally divided.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield myself 10 minutes.

Mr. President, the nomination of Leon Panetta to be Secretary of Defense is a wise and a solid nomination. Director Panetta has given decades of dedicated public service to this Nation, and we should all be grateful he is once again willing to answer the call and take the helm at the Department of Defense. We are also grateful to his wife Sylvia for her significant sacrifices over the last 50 years in supporting Leon Panetta's efforts in the public and private sectors.

When Mr. Panetta appeared before the Armed Services Committee at his nomination hearing, all of our Members commented invariably in the same way—reflecting the view that we are grateful Mr. Panetta is willing to take on this position. He is going to bring a reassuring level of continuity and in-depth experience. He has been a critical member of President Obama's national security team during his tenure as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The Department of Defense will need Director Panetta's skill and his wisdom to navigate the extraordinarily complex set of challenges in the years ahead.

Foremost among those demands are the demands on our Armed Forces, and these are exemplified by the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Between those two conflicts, we continue to have approximately 150,000 troops deployed. The U.S. military is also providing support to NATO operations to protect the Libyan people. In addition, even after the extraordinary raid that killed Osama bin Laden, we face potential terrorist threats against us and against our allies which emanate from Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and other places.

The risk of a terrorist organization getting their hands on and detonating an improvised nuclear device or other weapon of mass destruction remains one of the gravest possible threats to the United States. To counter that threat, the Defense Department is working with the Departments of State, Energy, Homeland Security, and other U.S. Government agencies to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, fissile materials, and dangerous technologies. As Secretary of Defense, Director Panetta's leadership in this area will be of vital importance. Here again, it is that experience as Director of the CIA which will be so invaluable.

In the coming weeks, President Obama and his advisers will face a number of key national security decisions. While the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq remains on track, there have been recent signs of instability in that country. As a result, it is possible that Iraq's political leadership may ask for some kind of continuing U.S. military presence beyond the December 31 withdrawal deadline which was agreed to by President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki in the 2008 Security Agreement.

Another key decision point is looming in Afghanistan regarding reductions in U.S. forces starting next month. President Obama said the other day:

It's now time for us to recognize that we have accomplished a big chunk of our mission and that it's time for Afghans to take more responsibility.

The President also said a few months ago that the reductions starting next month will be "significant." Hopefully, they will be. Director Panetta, while not assigning a specific number, agreed they need to be significant. A significant reduction in our troop level this year would send a critical signal to Afghan leaders that we mean it when we say our commitment is not open-ended and that they need to be urgently focused on preparing Afghanistan's security forces to assume security responsibility for all of Afghanistan. The more that Afghan security forces do that, the better the chances of success because the Taliban's biggest nightmare is facing a large, effective Afghan Army—an army which is already respected by the Afghan people, but now, hopefully—and soon—in control of Afghanistan's security.

Another major issue facing the Department is the stress that 10 years of unbroken war has placed on our Armed Forces. Over the last decade, many of our service men and women have been away from their families and homes for multiple tours. Not only is our force stressed, so are our military families. We owe them our best efforts to reduce the number of deployments and increase the time between deployments.

The next Secretary of Defense will have to struggle with the competing demands on our forces while Washington struggles with an extremely challenging fiscal environment. The