

Research Report

FLASHBACK: REPUBLICAN SENATORS ON THE URGENCY OF CONFIRMING CABINET MEMBERS AS A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY

ACCOUNTABLE 

SUMMARY: Under the leadership of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), the Senate has [not held a single confirmation hearing](#) on any Biden nominees, including on crucial national security positions. The Senate has yet to plan for President-Elect Joe Biden to have security positions in place on the first day he takes office, breaking from the previous three presidents: Trump received national security secretaries on day one, as did Obama, and George W. Bush (who would go on to [create the Homeland Security office](#)) had his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense confirmed within four hours of his swearing-in.

This lack of urgency runs against rhetoric from Republican Senators in previous administrations:

- Three Senators who chair committees in the lame duck session relevant to national security and a fourth Senator in line for a ranking position invoked urgency and the national interest on these confirmations:
 - Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), currently chairing the Intelligence Committee, called for Trump's CIA director to be "confirmed quickly" amidst a "critical juncture" for the department, and justified a hesitant vote for Trump's Secretary of State on the grounds that unnecessary delays ran against the "national interest" in an uncertain world.
 - Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), currently chairing the Homeland Security committee, argued for the importance of Trump having his national security team "from day one." Johnson had promised to expedite the confirmation of DHS nominee John Kelly to make "America safer and more secure."
 - Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK), currently chairing the Armed Services committee, praised a December 2016 continuing resolution amidst the lame-duck period on the ground it would "allow for a quick confirmation of General Mattis" as Defense Secretary, and later argued the positive impact Mattis' experience would bring to Trump's judgment.
 - Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), likely ranking member on the Homeland Security committee, argued for the urgency of restoring American leadership as it "faces enormous security challenges" in voting for Trump's nominees for Defense, DHS, and the UN Ambassador. Portman also cited how a President "needs a Secretary of State at his side" in announcing his vote for Rex Tillerson, saying the confirmation would enable Trump to confront "many threats to our security."
- The urgency of Trump's nominations were cited amidst harsh Republican criticism for Senate Democrats on what was ultimately a four-day delay in confirming Mike Pompeo as CIA Director. After Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) allowed for more time to explore concerns over Pompeo's nomination, Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR) invoked an increase risk of terrorism, saying, "for Senator Wyden's sake," Cotton hoped "the jihadists take the weekend off from trying to kill Americans." Senator McConnell also criticized the decision, saying Trump "should have his national security in place on day one" through a spokesperson.
- January 2017: Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, put out a press release stating: "New President Deserves To Have Defense Team In Place On Day One." Wicker stated the President would inherit challenges, including the restoration of rule of law and called for equipping the President with a Cabinet "immediately upon taking office."

Finally, Republican Senators struck similar tones during the Bush administration. Former Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) referenced the 2001 era 50/50 Senate split and said attacking nominees could be divisive, and that a president deserves his team as long as they're "quality people." In late 2006, Senator McConnell gladly said he would help to push through Defense Secretary nominee Robert Gates before the end of a lame-duck session. And back in 2000, Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) referenced the importance of a president having a say in his picks, when he objected to the continued tenure of George Tenet at the CIA on the grounds that Bush should have "his own person there."

Presidents Trump, Obama, And Bush Received Confirmation From The Senate On Numerous Defense Positions During Their First Day In Office

The Senate Confirmed Two Crucial Trump Nominees, For Defense And For Homeland Security, Hours After Trump Was Sworn Into Office. “Just hours after President Trump was sworn into office, the Senate on Friday confirmed two nominees for critical national security positions, approving James N. Mattis as defense secretary and John F. Kelly as homeland security secretary.” [New York Times, [1/20/17](#)]

On Obama’s First Day In Office, His Nominees For Homeland Security, Energy, Agriculture, Education, And Interior Were All Confirmed. “The Democratic-led U.S. Senate began confirming new President Barack Obama’s Cabinet on Tuesday, but it put off until Wednesday a vote on the designee for secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton. In a single unanimous vote, the Senate confirmed Steven Chu as energy secretary, Tom Vilsack as agriculture secretary, Arne Duncan as education secretary, Ken Salazar as interior secretary and Janet Napolitano as secretary of homeland security. It also approved Peter Orszag as head of the White House budget office.” [Reuters, [1/20/09](#)]

- **President Obama’s First Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, Was A Holdover From The Bush Administration.** “President-elect Barack Obama has decided to keep Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates in his post, a show of bipartisan continuity in a time of war that will be the first time a Pentagon chief has been carried over from a president of a different party, Democrats close to the transition said Tuesday.” [New York Times, [11/26/08](#)]

President George W. Bush’s Secretary Of State, Treasury Secretary, And Defense Secretary Were Confirmed Within Four Hours Of Bush’s Swearing In. “Following a brief flurry of activity on Saturday and the end of a 17-day Democratic takeover, the Senate goes to work this week in the unfamiliar posture of having a Republican majority in both chambers and in the White House. [...] But the narrow majority did not matter on Saturday, when the Senate swiftly confirmed by voice vote seven of President Bush’s Cabinet nominees. As planned, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, Treasury Secretary Paul H. O’Neill, and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld were confirmed within four hours of Bush’s swearing in.” [Congressional Quarterly, 1/21/00]

In The Trump Era, Republican Senators Called For The President To Have His Defense Cabinet On “Day One,” Saying It Was In The National Interest To Keep America Safe Amidst International Uncertainty

During The Trump Era, Senate Committee Chairs Praised The Quick Confirmation Of Cabinet Nominees On The Basis Of The Greater National Interest And Keeping America Safe

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), Who Will Serve As Ranking Member Of The Senate Intelligence Committee, Called For National Security Nominees To Be “Confirmed Quickly” And Justified A Hesitant Vote For Trump’s Secretary Of State On The Basis Of Opposition To Delays Against The “National Interest” Given International Uncertainty

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) Justified His Vote For Rex Tillerson To Be Secretary Of State, Despite Concerns, As Grounded In Opposition To Unnecessary Delays That Were Against The “National Interest” In An Uncertain World. “U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) issued the following statement today announcing his support for Rex Tillerson as America’s next secretary of state: I believe the president is entitled to significant deference when it comes to his choices for the cabinet. [...] I have no doubts about Mr. Tillerson’s

qualifications and patriotism. [...] However, his answers on a number of other important questions were troubling. [...] But in making my decision on his nomination, I must balance these concerns with his extensive experience and success in international commerce, and my belief that the president is entitled to significant deference when it comes to his choices for the cabinet. Given the uncertainty that exists both at home and abroad about the direction of our foreign policy, it would be against our national interests to have this confirmation unnecessarily delayed or embroiled in controversy. Therefore, despite my reservations, I will support Mr. Tillerson's nomination in committee and in the full Senate." [Senator Marco Rubio – Press Release, [1/23/17](#)]

Senator Rubio Said Mike Pompeo Was Nominated To Be Secretary Of State At A “Critical Juncture” For The Department And Hoped He Would Be “Confirmed Quickly.” “Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL): ‘I know Mike Pompeo well. He is an excellent choice. His experience as CIA Director, an Army officer, and a congressman, and his proven leadership on national security matters give him unique qualifications to lead the State Department at this critical juncture. I will enthusiastically support his nomination and am hopeful he can be confirmed quickly.’” [White House – Briefing Statement, [3/14/18](#)]

Expressing Support For The Nomination Of Mike Pompeo To Head The CIA, Senator Rubio Noted Intelligent Professionals Were America’s First Line Of Defense, And Said He Would Help Usher Pompeo’s Nomination. “U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) issued the following statement regarding President-elect Donald Trump’s intention to nominate U.S. Representative Mike Pompeo (KS-04) for director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA): [...] “[O]ur intelligence professionals are America’s first line of defense, and it’s essential that our leaders and policymakers have the best possible intelligence as they work to protect and advance our country’s interests.” [...] “I’m confident Mike will do a good job guiding the men and women of the CIA in their important work on behalf of our nation, and I look forward to helping usher his nomination through the Senate and working with him in his new role.” [Senator Marco Rubio – Press Release, [11/18/16](#)]

Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), Current Chair Of Homeland Security And Governmental Affairs Committee, Committed To Expediting Trump’s Homeland Security Nominee On The Basis Of Making America Safer, And Said It Was In The National Interest For A President To Set Up Their National Security Team “From Day One”

During General John Kelly’s Confirmation Hearing, Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI) Argued It Was Important For Any President To Set Up Their National Security Team “From Day One,” Citing The Obama Administration. “Chairman Johnson. It is an honor for me to preside as Chairman of this Committee for my second Congress, and certainly this is the first hearing of the full Committee of the 115th Congress. [...] So, again, thank you. I think it is incumbent on this Committee and I think it is incumbent on the U.S. Senate to recognize how important it is for any President to be able to set up and establish their national security team from day one. It is certainly what happened in 2009 with Secretary Janet Napolitano. I think that is exactly what should happen with General Kelly, the Senate hopefully will confirm General Kelly on the first day of the Administration.” [Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee – “Nomination of John F. Kelly,” [1/10/17](#)]

- **Senator Johnson Said The Goal Of The Homeland Security Committee Was A “Safe,” “Prosperous, And Secure America,” And That Nominee John Kelly Knew How To Do So.** “And what we first and foremost agree on as Members of this Committee, I think members of the audience as Americans, we all share the same goal. We all want a safe, a prosperous, and secure America. And in this Committee, we established a mission statement. It is pretty simple: To enhance the economic and national security of America. [...] So that is why we have been able to cooperate and achieve those kind of bipartisan results, and that is certainly what we are looking forward to. [...] General Kelly, I know you have some extraordinary people here that are going to be introducing you, so I will not steal their thunder, but just to say that I think, you are just an extraordinary individual, a great American who has served faithfully and sacrificed mightily for this Nation, you and your family. It is a family affair, and we recognize that, four star

general, a Gold Star parent. Your experience as head of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) with the threats this Nation faces, our unsecured border, you fully understand what the causation of that is, what the root causes are.” [Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee – “Nomination of John F. Kelly,” [1/10/17](#)]

Senator Johnson (R-WI) Met With Trump’s Homeland Security Nominee, General John Kelly, Saying The Office Was “One Of The Most Important Jobs In Government” And That He Would Work To “Expedite His Confirmation And Help Make America Safer And More Secure.” “Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, met Thursday afternoon with President-elect Donald Trump’s designated nominee for Homeland Security secretary, Gen. John Kelly. After the meeting, Johnson said: [...] Leading the Department of Homeland Security is one of the most important jobs in government. I look forward to working closely with General Kelly to expedite his confirmation and help make America safer and more secure.” [Senator Ron Johnson – Press Release, [12/16/16](#)]

Senator Johnson Said He Hoped UN Ambassador Nominee Nikki Haley Would Be “Swiftly Confirmed By The Senate” As The Country Needed Leadership “Now More Than Ever.” “Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) said this Tuesday after voting in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to confirm Nikki Haley as the next United States ambassador to the United Nations: ‘Now more than ever our country needs a steady leader who will aggressively champion American interests and values at the United Nations. I am confident that Governor Nikki Haley’s executive experience has fully prepared her to do just that, and I hope she will be swiftly confirmed by the Senate as the next United States ambassador to the United Nations.’” [Senator Ron Johnson – Press Release, [1/24/17](#)]

Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK), Who Will Serve As Ranking Member On The Armed Services Committee, Praised Legislation That Enabled A “Quick Confirmation” Of Trump’s Defense Nominee, And Praised The Positive Impact Defense Cabinet Officials Would Have On Trump’s Decision-Making

Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) Praised A December 2016 Continuing Resolution On The Basis It Included Language “That Will Allow For A Quick Confirmation Of General Mattis” As Secretary Of Defense. “U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), today released a statement in response to the Senate passage of H.R. 2028, the Continuing Resolution (CR), which prevents a government shutdown, provides additional funding for U.S. troops overseas and funds the government through April 28, 2017. [...] ‘This CR, was a last resort but will keep the government open and will allow us to proceed into next year and the new administration smoothly. Passing the CR ensures essential funding for our troops overseas who have been chronically underfunded by the Obama Administration. Lastly, this CR includes language that will allow for a quick confirmation of Gen. Mattis as President-elect Trump’s Secretary of Defense. It is my hope that next year we return to funding our government through regular order.’” [Senator Jim Inhofe – Press Release, [12/9/16](#)]

In An Interview, Senator Inhofe Argued General Mattis Would Have A Positive Impact On Trump In Shaping America’s Military And Foreign Policy, Saying Trump Would Rely On His Background. “MARTIN: Will General Mattis have President Trump’s ear when it comes to shaping America’s military and foreign policy? INHOFE: I’m absolutely certain of that. And one reason I am is that Mattis is the type of person who’s not going to come out of retirement unless he knows that he is going to be able to do what he is trained to do. And he knows also that we’ll have a president who doesn’t have the same background who’s relying on him. One of the things, it’s my understanding, that has made Donald Trump successful in business is that he hires people who know what they’re doing and lets them do it. And that’s a good style. And that’s one that I think that is going to pass through to his subordinates in his Cabinet as he takes office.” [NPR, [1/12/17](#)]

Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), Possible Future Ranking Member Of The Homeland Security Committee, Invoked “Enormous Security Challenges At Home And Abroad,” As Well As The Need For Qualified Staff At The President’s Side, In Voting For Trump Cabinet Nominees

After Voting To Confirm Trump's Defense And DHS Nominees, Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) Argued That The Country "Faces Enormous Security Challenges Both At Home And Abroad" And That America's Leadership Role Needed To Be Restored. "U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) issued the following statement after voting to confirm General James Mattis as the Secretary of Defense and General John Kelly as the Secretary of Homeland Security: 'Our country faces enormous security challenges both at home and abroad. Instead of 'leading from behind,' as the Obama administration has done for eight years, we must re-engage with our allies and restore America's leadership role in the world. Both General Mattis and General Kelly have served this country with great distinction and we will all benefit from their wealth of national security experience. With these choices, President Trump has made clear that he is serious about rebuilding our military, defeating ISIS, and protecting the safety and security of the American people. I look forward to working with both of them in their new roles.'" [Senator Rob Portman – Press Release, [1/20/17](#)]

Senator Portman Said He Voted To Confirm Rex Tillerson As Secretary Of State As President Trump "Needs A Secretary Of State At His Side" As He Began "Confronting The Many Threats To Our Security." "U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced today that he intends to vote for the nomination of Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State during a vote at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He issued the following statement: 'After much deliberation, I plan to vote for Rex Tillerson to be our next Secretary of State. I have long argued that every president — no matter the party — should be given considerable leeway when it comes to putting together his or her team. President Trump needs a Secretary of State at his side as he begins the task of restoring American leadership and confronting the many threats to our security around the world.'" [Senator Rob Portman – Press Release, [1/23/17](#)]

Senator Portman Supported Nikki Haley For UN Ambassador, Saying "We Must Restore American Leadership" In An Increasingly Dangerous World. "Portman: 'I am pleased to support the nomination of Governor Haley for the position of Ambassador to the United Nations. In our increasingly dangerous and volatile world, we must restore American leadership. I was reassured by Governor Haley's responses during our hearing, and her commitment to promote U.S. national security interests, stand up for our allies such as Israel, and better engage and respond to the disinformation and propaganda campaigns being waged by Russia, China, and others.'" [[2/7/17](#)]

A Four-Day Delay In The Confirmation Of Trump's CIA Director Earned Strong Objections - With Senator Cotton (R-AR) Linking The Delay To An Increased Chance Of Jihadist Violence At The Inaugural Weekend, And Senator McConnell (R-KY) Saying Trump Deserved A National Security Team In Place On Day One

January 19, 2017: Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) Objected To A Friday Vote For CIA Director Nominee Mike Pompeo For Three Days, Wanting Senators To Be Able To Vocalize Concerns Over The Nomination. "Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, a Democratic member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a vocal privacy advocate, has formally objected to the Senate voting Friday on CIA director nominee Rep. Mike Pompeo's nomination after Donald Trump is sworn in as president, a source familiar with the situation told CNN Thursday. Instead, the source said, the Pompeo vote would likely be pushed back until Monday, after senators critical of Pompeo's confirmation have time to vocalize their concerns during debate on the floor." [CNN, [1/19/17](#)]

January 20, 2017: Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR) Linked The "Obstructed" Vote To Confirm Pompeo To An Increased Terror Threat, Saying Americans Were At A National-Security Event That Weekend And He Hoped For Senator Wyden's Sake That "The Jihadists Take The Weekend Off From Trying To Kill Americans." "U.S. Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) today released the following statement after Senate Democrats obstructed the nomination of Mike Pompeo as CIA Director: 'Hundreds of thousands of Americans are in Washington this weekend at a designated special national-security event, yet the Democrats are

obstructing the nomination of Mike Pompeo as CIA Director for no good reason. For Senator Wyden's sake, I hope the jihadists take the weekend off from trying to kill Americans.” [Senator Cotton – Press Release, [1/20/17](#)]

January 20, 2017: Referencing The Pompeo Delay, A Spokesman For Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) Said President Trump “Should Have His National Security In Place On Day One.” “An objection from three Democratic senators will delay the U.S. Senate’s vote to confirm Kansas Rep. Mike Pompeo as the new director of the Central Intelligence Agency. [...] Republicans are not pleased. “Leader McConnell has made it very clear President Trump should have his national security team in place on day one,” said David Popp, a spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.” [McClatchy DC, [1/20/17](#)]

January 23, 2017: The Senate Confirmed Mike Pompeo To Be Director Of The CIA, 66-32. “The Senate on Monday confirmed Rep. Mike Pompeo to be director of the CIA, following a spirited debate in which Democrats expressed concern about his stances on domestic surveillance, data collection and torture. The vote was 66 to 32, with a majority of Democrats voting no — as well as Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky.” [Politico, [1/23/17](#)]

Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS) Argued A “New President Deserves To Have Defense Team In Place On Day One” Amidst Challenges At Home And Abroad, And That “The Challenges We Face Around The World Demand A Ready And Capable National Security Team”

Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS) Press Release Sub-Headline: “New President Deserves To Have Defense Team In Place on Day One” [Senator Roger Wicker – Press Release, [1/16/17](#)]

- **Senator Wicker Said He Hoped The Senate Would Avoid “Needless Procedural Delays” That Would Deny President Trump The “Ability To Hit The Ground Running On Day One,” Particularly On National Security.** “When Donald Trump assumes the presidency on January 20, he will inherit a wide variety of challenges at home and abroad. In recent years, America has lost ground with our allies, and our enemies have been emboldened by a lack of resolve. [...] I am hopeful that the Senate can avoid needless procedural delays that would deny President-elect Trump the ability to hit the ground running on Day One, particularly with his national security team. I am committed to working with my colleagues to ensure a smooth confirmation process.” [Senator Roger Wicker – Press Release, [1/16/17](#)]
- **Senator Wicker Noted Trump Would “Inherit” Challenges At Home And Abroad Upon Taking Office, Including Restoring The Rule Of Law, And That Equipping The President With A Cabinet “Immediately Upon Taking Office” Would Work To Attain Those Goals.** “When Donald Trump assumes the presidency on January 20, he will inherit a wide variety of challenges at home and abroad. In recent years, America has lost ground with our allies, and our enemies have been emboldened by a lack of resolve. The price of health insurance continues to rise, leaving people with fewer choices for coverage. Despite recent good news that consumers and small businesses are showing more confidence in the economy, millions of Americans still can’t find work. For those fortunate enough to have a job, weak economic growth has led to stagnant wages. Last November, voters chose to shake up that status quo by electing a unified government to represent them in Washington. Regardless of political affiliation, I believe we can all agree that more needs to be done to revitalize the economy, rebuild crumbling infrastructure, and restore the rule of law. One of the first steps in attaining those goals is to equip President Trump with a Cabinet in place immediately upon taking office.” [Senator Roger Wicker – Press Release, [1/16/17](#)]
- **Senator Wicker Singled Out Defense Secretary Nominee General Mattis For Praise, Saying His Extensive Knowledge On Military And Foreign Policy “Will Serve Our Troops And Our National Security Interests Well.”** “President-elect Trump has chosen well-qualified individuals to lead the various executive departments and agencies. This holds true with his choice of former Marine Corps General

James Mattis to lead the Defense Department. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I met with Gen. Mattis in advance of his nomination hearing. His extensive knowledge on military strategy and foreign policy will serve our troops and our national security interests well.” [Senator Roger Wicker – Press Release, [1/16/17](#)]

Following Mike Pompeo’s Confirmation Vote To Be CIA Director, Senator Wicker Argued The Challenges The Nation Faced Demanded A Capable National Security Team, And Called For Cabinet Votes To Continue To Enable The Administration To Get To Work. “U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., today issued the following statement after the Senate approved Congressman Mike Pompeo to be the new CIA Director by a vote of 66-32: ‘The challenges we face around the world demand a ready and capable national security team. Mike Pompeo will be a well-qualified member of that team for President Trump, and I am glad the Senate has acted to confirm his nomination. These votes on nominees should continue, just as they did in the early days of the Obama Administration. The sooner the Senate starts voting on the President’s Cabinet nominees, the sooner the Trump Administration can get to work on priorities that matter most to the American people.’” [Senator Roger Wicker – Press Release, [1/23/17](#)]

Former President George W. Bush Had His Defense Team Confirmed Within Four Hours Of His Swearing-In – And During His Term, Republican Senators Defended The President’s Claim To A Cabinet Of His Own People

Asked About A Controversial Bush Nominee, Then Senator-Orrin Hatch (R-UT) Referenced A 50-50 Split In The Senate, And Said The President Deserves To Have The People That He’s Nominated As Long As They’re Quality People. “HUME: Senator, we’re almost out of time, but let ask you -- give you a chance to make a quick response to something that your colleague, Democratic Senator Kerry of Massachusetts, has said this, day which is that in his view the nomination of John Ashcroft is divisive and comes from a man who promised to be a uniter and not a divider. What’s your reaction to that? HATCH: Well, I don’t see anything divisive about it. Every senator there knows John Ashcroft is a man of integrity. [...] And to be honest with you, I think it’s time for us to get together as Democrats and Republicans. We’re 50-50. One of the most divisive things they could do is to Bork John Ashcroft, and I might add Linda Chavez or Gale Norton. They’re good people. And I’ll tell you, the president deserves to have the people that he’s nominated as long as they’re quality people, and all three of them are.” [Fox News – “Fox News Sunday,” 1/7/01]

Referencing News That George Tenet Would Continue In His Role As CIA Director, Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) Objected, Saying Bush Should Choose Someone New To Have “His Own Person There.” “The current [CIA] director, George Tenet, would like to keep his job, according to CIA officials and lawmakers. ‘He enjoys the job, and I think he would be willing to continue serving, if asked for some period of time,’ said one intelligence official familiar with Tenet’s views. [...] On Thursday, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said Bush should choose a new director of Central Intelligence so that he would have ‘his own person there.’” [Chattanooga Times Free Press, 12/29/00]

Senator McConnell Joined Then-Senator Frist (R-TN) To Say They Looked Forward To Pushing The Nomination Of Defense Secretary Robert Gates During A Lam-Duck Session, With McConnell Expressing Optimism He Would Be Confirmed Before The End Of The Year. “Robert Gates, picked by President Bush to take over at the Pentagon, received initial endorsements from Republican and Democratic Senate leaders Friday after meeting with them on Capitol Hill. [...] Senate Republican Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Senate Majority Whip Mitch McConnell said they looked forward to pushing through the confirmation in the lame-duck session. ‘We’re optimistic that Bob Gates will be confirmed before the first of the year,’ said McConnell, R-Ky., who will become minority leader next year.” [Associated Press, 11/18/06]