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Chuck Hagel confirmation hearing: Holding firm on Iraq, beating an aggressive campaign

Allen McDuffee on January 31, 2013

Chuck Hagel's charm offensive before confirmation hearing: Chuck Hagel, the former Republican senator tapped to become the next secretary of defense, has gone on a charm offensive in the lead-up to his confirmation hearing on Thursday, attempting to beat back a well-funded, aggressive campaign that has sought to depict him as an anti-Israel, homophobic politician eager to gut the Pentagon's budget. Hagel's pushback during meetings with more than 50 senators and leaders of special interest groups this month appears to have been effective, said an official helping him prepare for the hearing. (Washington Post)

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Chuck Hagel should stand by Iraq opposition: "When former Senator Chuck Hagel appears before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday, he will likely be asked his views on the Iraq war. While Hagel voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq, he did so with stated reservations, cautioning his Senate colleagues, 'How many of us really know and understand much about Iraq, the country, the history, the people, the role in the Arab world? I approach the issue of post-Saddam Iraq and the future of democracy and stability in the Middle East with more caution, realism, and a bit more humility,'" write CAP's Larry Korb and Matt Duss. (Politico)

Chuck Hagel is not controversial: "I believed—and still believe—that Hagel will be a good secretary of defense, because he seems generally disinclined to support foolish wars. But he is no peacenik and he's no radical. He may question assumptions here and there, or give President Obama honest advice that he might not want to hear. But the odds are long against Chuck Hagel being a truly transformative SecDef," writes Cato's Chris Preble. (Cato)

5 Senators to watch in Chuck Hagel's confirmation hearing. (Washington Post)

Brookings' E.J. Dionne: The new politics of immigration. (Washington Post)

CFR's Amity Shlaes: In Davos or in combat, give women what they earn. (Bloomberg)

Pro choice and pro life: “Since abortion is a matter of life and death, politics ought to be secondary when we reflect on the issue. But political considerations aren’t trivial. Over the last 20 years, Democrats have captured the middle ground on abortion. Bill Clinton approximated the public mood by declaring that abortion should be “safe, legal, and rare.” Republicans, on the other hand, have found themselves embroiled in an awkward debate about whether rape victims should be required to carry their pregnancies to term. This asymmetry has been around as long as *Roe v. Wade*. But why should conservatives let *Roe* define them?” asks Manhattan Institute’s Avik Roy. (National Review)

Brookings’ Alfred Engelberg: The drug patent’s real challenge. (Politico)