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## **Obama nominates, Senate confirms first six Cabinet members – Sen. Harkin congratulates new USDA Sec. Tom Vilsack**

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Squeezed in between President Obama's stirring inaugural address, his formal lunch with Senate and House members on Capitol Hill, and his drive down the Pennsylvania Avenue parade route to the White House on Tuesday, the President signed nominations for his Cabinet members. Because the Senate held confirmation hearings on a number of the nominees last week, within hours of the inauguration, the full Senate cast a single voice vote to confirm:

- **Steven Chu** as Energy Secretary
- **Arne Duncan** as Secretary of Education
- Former Arizona Gov. **Janet Napolitano** as Secretary of Homeland Security
- Former Sen. **Ken Salazar** as Secretary of the Interior
- Retired Gen. **Eric Shinseki** as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and,
- Former Iowa Gov. **Tom Vilsack** as Secretary of Agriculture
- **Peter Orszag** as Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a sub-cabinet position.

A vote for Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton has been postponed by at least a day due to an objection filed Tuesday by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX). Cornyn's objection has forced the Senate to hold a roll-call vote on her nomination.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA) immediately congratulated fellow Iowan Tom Vilsack on his confirmation as Agriculture Secretary. Harkin said:

“President Obama could not have made a better selection for Agriculture Secretary than Tom Vilsack. He knows how to bring change that will help to strengthen and rebuild the farm and rural economy on a sound foundation. As governor, Tom Vilsack was committed to better nutrition and providing food assistance to those who need it. He built a strong record in promoting renewable energy, rural economic opportunity, and conservation. These qualifications will serve him well as he transitions into Agriculture Secretary. Tom Vilsack's

confirmation today signifies new leadership for the USDA, but also a new focus on the issues important to all Americans, including nutrition, conservation, energy and promoting the rural economy.”

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