

# Ratification of the START Follow-On: *The Decisive Dozen*

By Sophie Walker and Miles Pomper

On April 8, 2010, Presidents Obama and Medvedev will sign a long-negotiated successor to the 1991 START agreement in Prague. The next battle for this new arms control treaty is to win support for its ratification in the U.S. Senate. Ratification of the new treaty first requires that a resolution of ratification be approved by a two thirds majority (or 67 votes) in the Senate. Assuming that all 57 Democrats vote in favor of ratification, ten more votes will be required for passage. Republican concerns voiced during negotiations and the current political polarization in the Senate poses a challenge to efforts to gain these additional ten “yea” votes.

However, when looking at the voting patterns of the crucial individuals, Republican and Independent senators, for the three most recent major U.S-Russian arms control treaties—START in 1992, START II in 1996<sup>1</sup>, and the Moscow Treaty in 2003—a path towards passage of the treaty seems possible. If senators who voted favorably for two or three of the past arms control treaties vote favorably again, then 11 Republicans and one Independent senator will vote favorably, making 69 “yea” votes. (See attached table for overview of past votes)

It must be noted that Republican Senators John McCain and Independent Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut who are included in the “decisive dozen,” publicly raised concerns during the treaty’s negotiation that it would inhibit U.S. flexibility in deploying missile defenses. All Republican senators as well as Lieberman also wrote a letter stating that further reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal would be acceptable only if accompanied by “a significant program to modernize our nuclear deterrent.” Several other issues – from Russia’s substantial non-strategic nuclear weapons arsenal to verification doubts – can be expected to be raised during the Senate debate as well, despite Obama administration attempts to allay some of those concerns. In deciding whether or not those steps are sufficient—particularly in the current highly partisan political atmosphere—these 12 senators will play a key role.

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<sup>1</sup> START II never entered into force because the Russian parliament’s resolution of ratification conditioned entry into force on conditions related to missile defense which the United States did not meet.

SENATOR	1992 START (93-6)	1996 START II (87-4)	2003 SORT (Moscow) (95-0)	NEW START TENDENCY
Alexander (R-TN)	NV	NV	Y	
Barrasso (R-WY)	NV	NV	NV	
Bennett (R-UT)	NV	Y	Y	Y
Bond (R-MO)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brown (R-MA)	NV	NV	NV	
Brownback (R-KS)	NV	NV	Y	
Bunning (R-KY)	NV	NV	Y	
Burr (R-NC)	NV	NV	NV	
Chambliss (R-GA)	NV	NV	Y	
Coburn (R-OK)	NV	NV	NV	
Cochran (R-MS)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Collins (R-ME)	NV	NV	Y	
Corker (R-TN)	NV	NV	NV	
Cornyn (R-TX)	NV	NV	Y	
Crapo (R-ID)	NV	NV	Y	
DeMint (R-SC)	NV	NV	NV	
Ensign (R-NV)	NV	NV	Y	
Enzi (R-WY)	NV	NV	Y	
Graham (R-SC)	NV	NV	Y	
Grassley (R-IA)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Gregg (R-NH)	NV	Y	Y	Y
Hatch (R-UT)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hutchison (R-TX)	NV	Y	Y	Y
Inhofe (R-OK)	NV	N	Y	
Isakson (R-GA)	NV	NV	NV	
Johanns (R-NE)	NV	NV	NV	
Kyl (R-AZ)	NV	A	Y	
LeMieux (R-FL)	NV	NV	NV	
Lugar (R-IN)	Y	Y	Y	Y
McCain (R-AZ)	Y	Y	Y	Y
McConnell (R-KY)	Y	Y	A	
Murkowski (R-AK)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Risch (R-ID)	NV	NV	NV	
Roberts (R-KS)	NV	NV	Y	
Sessions (R-AL)	NV	NV	Y	
Shelby (R-AL)	Y	A	Y	
Snowe (R-ME)	NV	Y	Y	Y
Thune (R-SD)	NV	NV	NV	
Vitter (R-LA)	NV	NV	NV	
Voinovich (R-OH)	NV	NV	Y	
Wicker (R-MS)	NV	NV	NV	
Lieberman (I-CT)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sanders (I-VT)	NV	NV	NV	
			<b>TOTAL (including 57 Democrats)</b>	<b>69 (67 needed)</b>

**Y: Yea vote, N: Nay vote, A: Abstained, NV: Not voting (not in the Senate at that time)  
Two or three Yea votes without any Nay votes or abstentions constituted a Y in the final column.**