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Statements From Gillibrand News Conference

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

Updated, 2:44 p.m. | Gov. [David A. Paterson](#) announced on Friday afternoon his decision to appoint Representative [Kirsten E. Gillibrand](#) to fill the United States Senate seat previously occupied by [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#), now the secretary of state.

Excerpts from the statements at the news conference follow.

Mr. Paterson, flanked by Ms. Gillibrand, said:

Thank you. So it's August the 14th, 2003. And I am going to meet a lawyer who's going to be meeting me in an office building in Manhattan. She hails from the upstate region, and I am going to try to convince her not to run for Congress in 2004. I'd like her to run for the State Senate because at the time, I'm the minority leader of the State Senate and I go into the building to meet her and suddenly all the lights go out. This is the blackout of 2003. So I told my assistant that Kirsten Gillibrand is 8½ months pregnant, so what we should do instead of leaving is we should wait down here - I've never met her, and she's 8½ months pregnant — and we should meet her and perhaps we should drive her somewhere because it's very difficult to move around in the heat of the summer and with the blackout. So we wait and we wait and we wait. And finally, about 45 minutes later, Kirsten comes through the door and we went up and addressed her. And we found out two things: No. 1, the woman was not Kirsten. And No. 2, she was not pregnant. Apparently, independent as always, Kirsten Gillibrand went out the back door and walked all the way to Penn Station. And so this brings us to today.

We just saw an orderly transference of power pursuant to our Constitution on Tuesday, where one president replaced another in the peaceful way that America has informed the world. Today our United States Constitution acts again. It empowers states to replace United States Senate seats, when a seat becomes vacant. States have different ways of achieving this; New York is one of the overwhelming number of states that fills this vacancy based on a gubernatorial appointment. I am privileged and yet responsible to make that appointment today. I appoint the senator from this moment on until a special election — there is a special election, it will be held in November 2010. The Senate's regular seat ends in 2012, whereby there will be another election.

And so in this interim period, I didn't ask for this responsibility but it is my privilege and honor to execute our state's statute this afternoon, and thank you all for joining us here in Albany.

When I became aware that this duty would fall on me, I set up a process to choose the senator. I began by asking those who were interested to submit their names to my office. I then interviewed all the candidates that were interested. We issued a questionnaire for the candidates to determine how they felt about a variety of issues. We had a process to

determine if there was anything in any of the candidates' background that would eliminate them from consideration. I then consulted with a number of citizens, with civic leaders, with leaders from the areas of business and labor, from health care and education, from elected officials and from individuals who had relationships with some or multiple numbers of the candidates. Finally, I had to weigh this decision among all those who were, had been put before me, and came up with a decision.

And today I have reached one and I believe I have found the best person to become the next United States senator from New York. I knew that I had to find someone who in this difficult period would find the best ways to educate our children. I knew I had to find someone that would help in a difficult period to administer health care. I knew that we would have to address this economy, which continues to turn downward, and at the same time provide a way of monitoring our banks and financial institutions. There are so many different areas in which the new senator will be able to help the citizens of New York and all Americans and I feel we have reached a decision that brings us our best candidate.

This was not based on gender, on geographic location, on race, religion or sexual orientation. This decision was made on who the best candidate would actually be. This senator has great shoes to fill. This particular seat has previously been represented by icons such as Robert Francis Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Hillary Rodham Clinton. The last senator from this district was sworn in as secretary of state this week, leaves very big shoes to fill. And we heard this morning - I did and so did Senator Schumer - from Senator Hillary Clinton. Kirsten, she wants to extend you her best wishes and all the help you might possibly need in this new endeavor. She thinks you will be a great representative for the people of New York State.

Kirsten Gillibrand came to the House of Representatives in 2007, eschewing my offer to run for the State Senate, by the way, and she immediately introduced legislation that would implement the findings of the Sept. 11 Commission. She also introduced legislation that would require that our federal budget be balanced annually. Our state budget is balanced annually, our federal budget is not. She introduced legislation to double the tax credit for child care and to extend to every family a \$10,000 tax credit for tuition. As a good government advocate, she has publicized her schedule online, becoming the first House of Representatives member to do that, and has publicized every earmark that she has received for her district. She is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and also the House Agriculture Committee. On the House Armed Services Committee, she has been on the terrorism threats and assessments subcommittee and also on the sea power subcommittee. On the Agriculture Committee, she has served on the committee for livestock — livestock, dairy and poultry — and she has also served on the committee for conservation credit and energy research subcommittee and has also served on the horticulture and organic agriculture committee. So she has been busy in just one term on the House of Representatives. In addition to that, she is the founder of the high-technology committee in the House of Representatives.

So with all that work, she is dynamic, she is articulate, she is perceptive, she is courageous, she is outspoken. I am appointing her to the United States Senate representing New York today. Please welcome our next senator, and current congresswoman, Kirsten Gillibrand.

Ms. Gillibrand said:

Thank you, Governor, for this incredible honor. I appreciate the opportunity that you have afforded me and the trust that you place in me. We are all blessed to have an extraordinary, effective and committed leader during these very difficult times, and I look forward to being your partner as we lift ourselves out of this budget crisis and restore opportunity to all New Yorkers. And thank you to our first lady, whose passion for children's issues and their future inspires all of us.

I realize that for many New Yorkers, this is the first time you've heard my name and you don't know much about me. Over these next two years, you will get to know me, but much more importantly, I will get to know you. As I represented the needs and the priorities of the 20th Congressional District of New York, I will represent the many diverse views and voices of the entire state as your senator. From the dairy farmers of western New York to the homeowners in Long Island facing crushing property taxes to the workers who have lost their job in this economic crisis to all the folks who work in our financial institutions, I intend to listen to all of my constituents, and all of my colleagues in government, to be part of the solution.

I am so grateful to so many of you who are here for your leadership and your service to our great state. Perhaps most significantly, I look to Secretary of State Clinton, whose seat with which Governor Paterson has now entrusted me, with extraordinary appreciation and humility. I aspire to follow in her footsteps, knowing her shoes I can only hope to fill. I cannot fully retell you how many times she has personally inspired me to action, but I will share just one. When she was first lady, she stood before thousands of people in Beijing and she bravely called the world to action to recognize that women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights. And I, too, on that day heard her call. As a recent law school graduate in New York City, I decided to become active in politics and I started to organize women and a lawyer and I worked on campaigns across the state and nationally. And I remember working on her first campaign and watching her become this extraordinary advocate for New York families, from finding new customers for our farmers in her Farm to Folk - excuse me, Farm to Fork — program to tireless advocating for health care and benefits for 9/11 workers. Secretary Clinton has been a clarion call to so many like me who now hope to make a difference in the lives of others. Now all America looks to her as our secretary of state and to our new President Obama to rebuild America's greatness around the world and restore the beacon of light and hope that defines our nation.

Ms. Gillibrand proceeded to thank a long list of political figures: New York's senior senator, Charles E. Schumer; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Democrat of California; Representative Charles B. Rangel, a Manhattan Democrat and the dean of New York's Congressional delegation; Representative Michael R. McNulty, "a mentor and a friend," who retired from Congress earlier this month; and Representatives Steve Israel, Brian Higgins and Carolyn B. Maloney, all of whom were also considered as potential appointees to the Senate.

Ms. Gillibrand emphasized her thanks to several fellow women, all Democrats, who represent New York in the House: Nita M. Lowey, who had once expressed interest in the same Senate seat; Louise M. Slaughter; and Carolyn McCarthy, whose husband died in a gunman's rampage on the Long Island Rail Road in 1993, and who vowed on Thursday to challenge Ms. Gillibrand, should Mr. Paterson appoint her, saying she disagreed with Ms. Gillibrand's support for the rights of gun owners.

Ms. Gillibrand continue to thank other officials: State Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo, whom she worked for as a special counsel when Mr. Cuomo as secretary of housing and urban development during the Clinton administration; Judith Hope, former chairwoman of the State Democratic Party; and Assemblyman [John J. McEneny](#), whom she called “my adopted political dad.”

Ms. Gillibrand added:

I grew up right here in Albany and my role model in politics was my grandmother. I don't know how many of you knew Polly Noonan, but she was a woman who never went to college and she was a secretary, back at a time when very few women worked, in our State Legislature. Somehow she grew a passion for politics that grew during her lifetime. ... Over a 50-year period she became such a powerful force in Democratic politics and government here. What I admired so much about her was her passion: It was politics and charity work and her grandkids. She had such a love for being involved and helping people. ... I thought someday I may serve, someday I may be part of this. And I always knew that public service was something that we should aspire to, that it takes great courage, that it takes great commitment, that it matters because it affects everything in our lives, everything that we do for our children, everything that we do for our parents. And that's what my grandmother taught me.

Then Ms. Gillibrand, a 42-year-old mother of two, thanked her husband, Jonathan; her mother; her siblings; and other members of her family.

Ms. Gillibrand finally turned her attention to policy issues:

I'm going to get to the policy, here we go. We are all painfully aware that New York has been hit very hard by this economic recession. In upstate New York, years of manufacturing decline have made the new downturn even harder to bear for our families. Downstate, the sudden collapse of the financial industry last fall has echoed throughout our economy. Wall Street makes up more than 20 percent of our state's revenues and the effect on our state budget has been devastating.

Governor Paterson ... offered transparent, pragmatic, straightforward thoughts about what our crisis was and how best to handle it. He offered his ideas, he offered his priorities, and that's exactly what the relationship between state government and federal government should be. ... I just want to commend Governor Paterson for his leadership so early on in this process. Maintaining and preserving jobs, improving manufacturing ... cultivating high-tech and biotech ... We will pass a wide-ranging stimulus package which will create jobs in New York ... making new investments in infrastructure, mass transit, high-speed rail throughout western and upstate New York, which Congresswoman Slaughter has taken a leading initiative on.

We want to invest in health care ... it is something that will lower costs for everyone across this state and that's something that will be in our fiscal stimulus package. ... As much as 80 percent of the new jobs come from small businesses and New York's entrepreneurial spirit is key to this growth. ... I think our state is poised to take advantage of the energy revolution. The greatest market opportunity of our generation is the alternative-energy markets and conservation technologies. ...

It's about taking those innovations to market and creating products that use those energy technologies. That kind of innovation does many things. No. 1, it addresses our national

security primary of becoming energy-independent. Second ... world leader. Third, it's the one thing that combats global warming so we can leave our world better for our children and our grandchildren.

We need tax cuts so families can afford to take care of their children. ... I have a 5-year-old son, it is very expensive for pre-K and early childhood education. ... If you are educated, you have the capacity to earn tens of thousands of dollars more than if you have a high school education. ...

We also have to address the burden of property taxes. As Tom Suozzi demonstrated in his outstanding report and analysis on the issue, property taxes are one of the greatest burdens we have in the state. ... We will find a solution that can lower property taxes, but make sure that we fund our schools, and that's the kind of leadership that Governor Paterson will provide.

I will also strive for economic and social justice. I will advocate for marriage equality, women's rights, preserving Social Security and the retirement that our seniors seem to be losing every day, and call for significant investments in education. ... Our veterans and our farmers all need their voices heard in Washington. ... I'd like to continue to serve on Armed Services and Agriculture.

Ms. Gillibrand concluded:

During the last two years, what I've learned the most about my service is that it's all about the people you serve. ... I can look someone in the eye and hear their concern and hear their priority and then do something about it. This has happened over and over again over these last two years and I can't tell you how meaningful it is to serve in that capacity.

I had one veteran ... he was a Vietnam veteran. They were evicting him from his apartment and they were turning off his electricity. ... Three calls later we got this gentleman the back pay he deserved. 'Every morning I wake up, I strap on my leg.' When you hear that from someone and know that the power of the office where we serve — in state, local and federal government — that is what we are all about. ... It will be my honor and most humble duty to serve each and every one of you as senator. God bless New York.

Ms. Gillibrand then walked over to Senator Schumer, and spoke to him. Mr. Paterson announced that President Obama had been trying to reach Ms. Gillibrand by telephone. "They said he's going to call back," the governor said. "Please call back."

Mr. Paterson said:

Before we give the media and the rest of the press an opportunity to speak with Congresswoman Gillibrand, who as of Sunday will become the senator, the secretary of state, [Lorraine Cortés-Vásquez](#) and me, both have signed the documents that will go to Washington — as soon as the documents reach Washington she becomes the senator, she can vote on legislation and serve New York.

Mr. Schumer praised the appointment of Ms. Gillibrand:

First I want to congratulate you, Governor, on your outstanding choice of Representative Kirsten Gillibrand to be the next senator from the great state of New York. She will be, I know, a great partner, a great colleague, a great senator. Gillibrand ... is one of the most

aggressive and effective members of the House and I have seen it first hand. ... We have fought side by side to bring high-tech jobs to Saratoga County. ... She has a reputation as a go-to person. ... Go to Kirsten Gillibrand and she will get it done. ... She's also highly skilled in the electoral area, to win twice in the most Republican electoral district in the state. Winning 62 percent against a well-funded challenger is no small accomplishment. As head of the D.S.C.C. for four years, where senators had to run in Republican areas, I know how hard this is, I know how valuable this is, in terms of winning elections. And most importantly, she's a great mom. ... Governor, the bottom line is this: With this choice, you hit the nail on the head. Congratulations. Furthermore, it's very important to have someone from upstate. Upstate New York, until now, has had no representation statewide and it has no representation in the Senate since 1970. This morning, I spoke to a New York City journalist who said, 'Why do we need someone from upstate?' That made me angry. Upstate New York has seven million people. ... The problems of upstate affect the whole state. ... Many of us work hard for upstate: Senator Clinton did and I do. But having someone from upstate is a real plus, and I commend the governor for having the courage to make this impressive choice. ... There's a current analogy in Washington right now. ... Many of us fight for upstate, but having someone from upstate is a whole lot different. ... I'm also proud that the governor chose a woman. We still have only 16 women in the Senate, and with the loss of Hillary Clinton. ... I've found that women candidates run better and win more easily. But above all, talent, ability, work ethic are the most important virtues for a senator, and Representative Gillibrand fits that bill. ...

At this point, another call from President Obama came in.

"I'm going to keep reading," Mr. Schumer declared, and plowed on. (Off stage, Mr. Paterson could be seen handing a cellphone to Ms. Gillibrand to take the president's call, and so Mr. Schumer paused.)

Mr. Schumer continued: "I say to Kirsten, while she's talking to the president, let's do our own listening tour, let's go to Bayside and Bed-Stuy, to Tottenville and Eastchester. ... I'm confident that just as when upstate got to know Hillary they came to love her, downstate will feel the same way for you," Mr. Schumer said.

He continued:

Now, I know that there are certain issues on which Kirsten and I disagree. Perhaps the starkest contrast is on guns ... I come from Brooklyn, Kirsten represents a very rural district upstate that includes no large cities. I'm confident that as Kirsten ... her views will evolve to reflect the whole state. This is naturally part of the process. When I was a congressman from Brooklyn, I opposed all agricultural subsidies. As senator, I came to sympathize with the struggles of upstate New York farmers and began to advocate for them. ... So in conclusion, my fellow New Yorkers, my fellow Americans, this is a crucial time for our state and for our nation. There are massive challenges and tough times ahead.

Mr. Paterson noted that Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller appointed Representative Charles E. Goodell, a Republican, to the Senate after the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Mr. Goodell, the governor noted, "promptly lost" the seat in 1970 to a conservative, James Buckley.

"That will not happen this time," Mr. Paterson said. He said that 42 percent of the state's

population lives upstate.

Later, Mr. Paterson introduced Representative Lowey, who also praised Ms. Gillibrand.

The news conference lasted well over an hour. (It was initially scheduled for noon but began late, with Mr. Paterson arriving at 12:16 p.m.) It capped a tumultuous and occasionally disorderly process in which public attention was focused on [Caroline Kennedy](#), the daughter of President John F. Kennedy, who expressed interest in the seat but finally withdrew from consideration this week.

Gathered around Mr. Paterson and Ms. Gillibrand, behind the lectern, was a throng of politicians — some of them themselves candidates for the Senate vacancy — who'd been summoned to Albany.

They included State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli; the State Assembly speaker, Sheldon Silver; the State Senate majority leader, Malcolm A. Smith; the Nassau County executive, Thomas R. Suozzi; the New York City public advocate, Betsy Gotbaum; the New York City comptroller, William C. Thompson Jr.; former Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, a Long Island Republican who was defeated by Mr. Schumer in 1998; Representative Gary L. Ackerman of Queens; and the former Bronx borough president (and mayoral candidate) Fernando Ferrer.