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U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent weigh in on Obama's selection of Hillary Clinton for Cabinet

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By Jessica Coomes and Trish G. Graber

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WASHINGTON, D.C. | U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., praised President-elect Barack Obama's selection of Hillary Clinton as secretary of state Monday and said he would support her Senate confirmation.

"You have someone who has the perspective we have in the Northeast and the challenges we have when it comes to protecting the homeland," Casey said. "She brings a unique perspective that not only helps her with the job she's going to be doing but will give our nation a better sense of protecting our cities in the Northeast."

Casey serves on the Senate foreign relations committee, which must consider confirming Clinton's appointment. The full Senate must then confirm her. Casey said he sees no reason to oppose Obama's pick.

"It's a very strong appointment," Casey said. "She's a patriot. She's someone who understands the challenges that national defense presents. We have to be both tough on terrorism and be prepared in a military sense, but also diplomacy and building alliances is a component of national security."

U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Lehigh Valley, said Clinton is capable of being secretary of state, but he said he expects the Senate confirmation process to focus on donations to the foundation of her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

Ruth Mandel, director of the Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics, said Hillary Clinton takes a "worldwide portfolio" to the position, after serving as first lady, senator and presidential candidate.

"She is a figure of enormous stature," Mandel said. "She's admired, not only here, but also has a global constituency."

Overall, Dent said, he gives Obama's recently named advisers "high marks."

Dent specifically praised Obama's decision to retain Defense Secretary Robert Gates: "President-elect Obama would be wise to heed his advice as often as possible."

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