

From those humble beginnings, she went on to receive degrees from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts and Harvard Business School.

Elaine Chao began her executive career at the U.S. Department of Transportation in 1986, as Deputy Administrator of the Maritime Administration, then as Deputy Secretary from 1989 to 1991. She served as the Director of the Peace Corps, in 1991, where she brought the Peace Corp programs to the liberated countries of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania; and as president and CEO of the United Way of America where she helped restore fiscal responsibility to an organization that had been damaged by mismanagement.

In 2001, she became the 24th U.S. Secretary of Labor, the first Asian Pacific American woman to be appointed to the President's cabinet in American history, in President George W. Bush's cabinet. During her 8-year tenure at the Department of Labor Department, she proved she has the skills to manage large multifaceted organizations as well as to initiate needed reforms and new programs that help create jobs and competitiveness in the workforce. Quite frankly, she was the best Secretary of Labor the United States has ever had.

During her tenure, the Department updated the white collar overtime regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which has been on the agenda of every administration since 1977. The most significant regulatory tort reform of President Bush's first term, the new regulations provided millions of low-wage vulnerable workers with strengthened overtime protection.

In 2003, under her leadership, the Department achieved the first major update of union financial disclosure regulations in more than 40 years, giving rank and file members enhanced information on how their hard-earned dues are spent. The Department set new worker protection enforcement records, including recovering record back wages for vulnerable low-wage immigrant workers. The Department also launched comprehensive reform of the Nation's publicly funded worker training programs, to better serve dislocated and unemployed workers.

I have complete confidence in her abilities and look forward to working with her in her new capacity as the 18th U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I support the nomination of Elaine Chao to be Secretary of Transportation.

Ms. Chao has proven a capable manager. She has served in several administrations, including as Secretary of Labor and Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Her experience will serve the Transportation Department and the Cabinet well.

At the Department of Transportation, Ms. Chao will be responsible for implementing one of President Trump's most ambitious agenda items—a massive investment in infrastructure. During the campaign, Mr. Trump proposed to invest \$1 trillion to

rebuild infrastructure over the next decade. And on November 9, 2016, President-Elect Trump said, “We are going to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals. We’re going to rebuild our infrastructure, which will become, by the way, second to none. And we will put millions of our people to work as we rebuild it.”

While we have received few details on the plan, I hope that Ms. Chao will work closely with Congress to identify needs within our States and invest broadly in roads, bridges, airports, rail, and transit. While I believe that public-private partnerships can be one avenue to drive transportation projects, we cannot rely on them to be the backbone of a transportation plan, as many communities would struggle to assemble the financing necessary to make such projects viable.

Our Nation's public infrastructure has historically been a bipartisan priority. It must remain so.

I appreciate Ms. Chao's commitment during her hearing to enforce the Davis-Bacon Act's requirement to pay fair wages to ensure that our Nation's construction jobs can sustain workers and their families. Commendably, Ms. Chao also emphasized her dedication to safety.

Maryland has a number of critical transportation priorities, including the Port of Baltimore, the MARC commuter rail, and increasingly congested highways like I-270 and I-81. We have also worked closely with the Federal Transit Administration on safety improvements to the Washington Metro, our Nation's subway, and have pushed for the creation of the Purple Line. I look forward to working with Secretary Chao to build a 21st century, multimodal transportation system that works for all of my constituents in Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, with respect to the pending Chao nomination, we yield back the remainder of our time so that we can proceed to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time is yielded back.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, we yield back our time as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Chao nomination?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL (when his name was called). Present.

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 35 Ex.]

YEAS—93

Alexander	Fischer	Murphy
Baldwin	Flake	Murray
Barrasso	Franken	Nelson
Bennet	Gardner	Paul
Blumenthal	Graham	Perdue
Blunt	Grassley	Peters
Boozman	Harris	Portman
Brown	Hassan	Reed
Burr	Hatch	Risch
Cantwell	Heinrich	Roberts
Capito	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cardin	Heller	Rubio
Carper	Hirono	Sasse
Casey	Hoeven	Schatz
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott
Cochran	Isakson	Sessions
Collins	Johnson	Shaheen
Coons	Kaine	Shelby
Corker	Kennedy	Stabenow
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Klobuchar	Tester
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Leahy	Tillis
Cruz	Lee	Toomey
Daines	Manchin	Udall
Donnelly	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Enzi	Menendez	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—6

Booker	Merkley	Schumer
Gillibrand	Sanders	Warren

ANSWERED “PRESENT”—1

McConnell

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from West Virginia.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of the Chao nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Tillerson nomination postcloture, and the Senate recess until 2 p.m., with the time during recess counting postcloture on the Tillerson nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the nomination of Rex W. Tillerson to be Secretary of State, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Rex W. Tillerson, of Texas, to be Secretary of State.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:11 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have nine unanimous consent requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. I ask unanimous consent that these requests be agreed to en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. I object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS OF STEVEN MNUCHIN AND TOM PRICE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss what happened in the Finance Committee today—or what didn't happen in the Finance Committee today. Two newspapers—one, the Columbus Dispatch, one of Ohio's best and most conservative newspapers, and the Wall Street Journal, one of this country's most conservative newspapers—reported that the two nominees in front of the Senate Finance Committee had lied to the committee. Treasury Secretary-Designee Mnuchin had lied when asked if his bank, OneWest, had done robo signings; he said no.

The Columbus Dispatch investigative reporters found, in fact, that they had done robo signings, and they found that dozens—probably hundreds, maybe thousands—of Ohioans lost their homes. A woman named Miss Duncan, who had paid her mortgage month after month, was doing everything right. She was foreclosed on—not anything of her doing—and her financial life was turned upside down.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Congressman PRICE, the designee for Health and Human Services, had lied about insider information he had. He had advantages that other investors didn't have in buying health care stocks as he sat on the health care committee in the House, as he voted, as he wrote amendments and bills dealing with health care.

These are nominees for agencies—the two most important economic agencies in the Federal Government, probably, at least in the Cabinet—who have lied about things that affect people's lives. It is hundreds of people—thousands,

maybe, in my State. We are not even the largest State on foreclosures caused by OneWest. Thousands, hundreds of thousands—who knows how many around the country, as he will not tell us yet—have lost homes because of his and his bank's actions, making him wealthier, to be sure, but upending people's lives in the cruelest kind of way when their homes are foreclosed on.

We are saying to Senator HATCH, the chairman of the Finance Committee: Get some answers here. Find out why these two nominees lied, and find out what they are going to do to fix it. Find out what they have in their backgrounds that they haven't disclosed to this committee.

We have no business voting on nominees before we have that kind of information. That is the reason that Democratic Senators of the Finance Committee, led by Ranking Member WYDEN, decided not to come to the committee to vote today—because it is the only way we can get Senator HATCH to bring those two forward to give us the information and to give the American public the information they need.

I might add that we probably did President Trump a favor today, because if these two nominees had been brought forward—and I assume confirmed, because Republicans are voting for every nominee, it seems, no matter what; I haven't seen a break from that yet—they may have come to the floor and have been confirmed, and there likely would have been a scandal early in the Trump Administration and in the Treasury Department and Health and Human Services Department—two incredibly important agencies.

I think that we, perhaps, in some sense, saved President Trump from himself and the damage that his nominees could do. I don't expect appreciation or thanks from the White House on this, but I do think this is an issue that should be taken care of before they head two of the most important and largest—if not largest, two of the most important—Federal agencies.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to discuss why I intend to oppose the nomination of Rex Tillerson as the Secretary of State. This is not a decision that I make lightly. I have no doubt that Mr. Tillerson has been a successful businessman, managing one of America's largest corporations at ExxonMobil. Many have attested to his being a man of character who has given back to his community and, particularly, through his work with the Boy Scouts of America.

I have no reason to doubt that he does have the character and decency that we would applaud in any person. However, when the United States faces some of the most complex global challenges in a generation, this is not the time to appoint as our Nation's top diplomat someone who has no dem-

onstrated experience articulating and advocating for America's interests, values, and commitment to our allies and partners.

As the events of this past week make clear, we need a Secretary of State who will speak up and candidly tell the truth to the President when he acts contrary to who we are as a nation and harms our relations with our partners and our standing in the world. Without an effective voice at the State Department for America's best interests, both within the executive branch and outside our borders, we will continue to see this administration, I fear, take steps that undermine cooperation with our closest allies and neighbors, violate our values, and ultimately make our troops and citizens less safe. I am concerned that Mr. Tillerson will not be such a voice for the American people.

Throughout the confirmation process, Mr. Tillerson has repeatedly demonstrated either his lack of preparation or his unwillingness, perhaps, to specifically declare himself on key issues. In particular, I am concerned about his views on Russia, climate change, and immigration, and how he will influence a White House that already seems determined to pursue campaign promises regardless of the impact on American foreign policy.

On Russia, Mr. Tillerson has demonstrated a familiarity with Putin and the Russian Government that is deeply concerning. Mr. Tillerson has spent his professional life advancing the interests of ExxonMobil—indeed, almost to the exclusivity of any other purpose. That is of concern, and should be of concern to all of us.

Even as the United States was re-evaluating its relationship with Russia in recent years, Mr. Tillerson has deepened his personal relationship with Putin, to the point that the Russian President awarded Mr. Tillerson the Russian Order of Friendship in 2013, supposedly a very high honor for a non-Russian. It appears that Mr. Tillerson opposed U.S. sanctions against Russia after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 because his multinational corporation stood to lose very lucrative oil contracts if sanctions were put in place.

International sanctions against Russia, imposed by the United States and the European Union, have sent a clear and effective message to Russia that their invasion of Ukraine is unacceptable. These sanctions are absolutely critical to multilateral efforts to hold Russia to its commitments to end the violence in Ukraine and restore its sovereignty, consistent with the Minsk agreements. The Russians claimed that these are separatists, that these are Ukrainians rising up, but the truth is that this is Russian-inspired, Russian-directed, and at the behest of Putin.

Mr. Tillerson's wavering on Russian sanctions, however, could weaken the resolve of our European allies in maintaining these sanctions. It could encourage Putin in his efforts to cut a