

Roy Blunt, John Thune, Steve Daines, Thom Tillis, Kevin Cramer, Chuck Grassley, Tom Cotton, Rand Paul, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 489.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Sherri A. Lydon, of South Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina.

Steve Daines, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Richard Burr, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven, Mitch McConnell.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

HONG KONG

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I would like to comment on the Hong Kong legislation that we passed this week. Tuesday night, the Senate unanimously passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, led by Senators RUBIO and CARDIN, Foreign Relations Chairman RISCH, and Ranking Member MENENDEZ, and a supporting cast of colleagues. This bill is intended to spur Hong Kong officials and pro-Beijing constituencies to protect Hong Kong's autonomy and its

special relationship with the United States and to hold those committing human rights violations in Hong Kong accountable. It builds on the 1992 United States-Hong Kong Policy Act, which asserts that the United States has a "strong interest in the continued vitality, prosperity, and stability of Hong Kong." I am grateful for the leadership of the Senators who worked to advance this bill.

The issue at hand is Hong Kong's right to an independent judicial system and its unique status in a one-country, two-system construct. The bill that spurred the June protests in Hong Kong—a bill pushed by the communist Chinese central government that sought to impose extraditions from Hong Kong to mainland China—would have directly undercut this judicial independence. This bill has been withdrawn, but a number of other grievances have boiled over into protests.

Hong Kong's autonomy is under attack, and China is posturing to "mainlandize" their economy. Recent educational reforms seek to undermine Hong Kong's culture and traditions through compulsory Mandarin classes instead of the Cantonese that most Hongkongers speak. The Chinese Government will say that westerners have the wrong impression of what is going on there, that this is strictly an internal matter. We beg to differ. There are more than 85,000 American citizens in Hong Kong. Moreover, the human rights of the people of Hong Kong are directly tied to U.S. interests in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's economic prosperity.

China has threatened repercussions if the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act is enacted. I imagine China is fearful that attention to human rights abuses in Hong Kong will draw increased attention to other human rights abuses in China, such as the estimated 1.5 million Muslim Uighurs in forced detention in one of China's western provinces.

Papers leaked this week from the government of the Communist Party and General Secretary Xi detail the coercive "reeducation" that goes on in these internment camps. Christians in China also face regular persecution and imprisonment for following their faith and living out their beliefs. The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act will help shed increased light on Beijing's aggression and on human rights abuses in Hong Kong.

Last night, the House sent this Senate bill to the President's desk with a resounding 417-to-1 vote—a clear statement that Congress stands with Hong Kong.

THANKSGIVING

Madam President, a week from today, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving. Like every Thanksgiving, I will be home in South Dakota celebrating with my family: My wife, my daughters, my sons-in-law, and my four—soon to be five—grandchildren. I will be taking on my traditional job of carving

the turkey and helping with the dishes afterward. I am looking forward to a lot of good pie—apple pie a la mode, pumpkin, with a lot of whipped cream, and my favorite is anything in the creamed-pie family.

I am looking forward to spending time outdoors. My daughters and I traditionally go on a trail run Thanksgiving morning. It is a good way to work up an appetite for all that pie. We all enjoy throwing around a football before or after the meal. South Dakotans are pretty resilient when it comes to being out in the cold. As long as we don't have tons of snow, we like to get outdoors on Thanksgiving.

Like many South Dakotans, I love to squeeze in a little pheasant hunting over Thanksgiving, whenever I can.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I love sitting down with my whole family—and extended family—and getting to spend time in South Dakota outdoors before winter really hits us.

Thanksgiving has a long tradition in this country. Long before the United States was a nation, various Colonies were celebrating days of thanksgiving. Our current celebration of Thanksgiving can be traced to Abraham Lincoln, who issued a proclamation in 1863 inviting a national celebration of Thanksgiving on the last Thursday in November.

In 1941, Congress codified the Thanksgiving holiday and permanently set the date as the fourth Thursday in November. I don't think it is too surprising that the celebration of Thanksgiving is a recurring part of our history. On Thanksgiving in my family, typically, we go around the table and say what we are thankful for. In this country, that is a pretty long list, including the tremendous natural riches of this country, from great rivers to magnificent mountains, to our wide-open access to the sea, and the tremendous freedoms that we enjoy. And in the 21st century, we enjoy freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, and other freedoms, like the freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, or excessive fines or cruel and unusual punishments. All of these freedoms that we so often take for granted are still unknown to too many people across the world.

The United States is not perfect, and we don't always get it right, but we enjoy tremendous blessings in this country. It is important not to take them for granted. Thanksgiving gives us a chance to pause and reflect on all that we have been given.

I am grateful to God for so many blessings this year. I am thankful for the great blessing of my family—my dad, Harold, a World War II aviator who will turn 100 next month; my brothers and sister; my wife Kimberly, the best thing in my life; my beautiful daughters and my sons-in-law; and our grandchildren, pretty much the most amazing grandchildren ever, in my own unbiased opinion.