

There used to be a mantra, if you will, that nations should think globally but act locally. In this country, we should produce more of the energy we consume rather than expect other nations to supply it to us. We have the ability to reduce our dependency on imported energy sources. We just need to get on doing it. I think this amendment will help us cut our prices now, but especially looking out for the long term, help us to avoid higher prices for the years to come.

Over the weekend, I was reading through the local columnists in the Anchorage paper. One guy had it right. He said: I think the Republicans need to be more supportive of alternatives and renewables, the Democrats need to be more supportive of increased domestic production, and the American consumer needs to just conserve more. Sounds like pretty sage and wise advice to me.

With all of those components—increased domestic production, focus on the future of energy, which is renewables and alternatives, and focus on conservation and efficiency—we have ourselves the start of a pretty good energy policy for this country.

I appreciate the time of my colleagues. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ROBERT CONRAD

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, anniversaries are usually a time of joy, a time to celebrate, a time to remember happy occasions in one's life. This weekend, my sons celebrated Mother's Day with my wife, their mom, Brooke. Many know this is the 100th anniversary of Mother's Day.

Speaking of their mom, she and I will celebrate our 26th wedding anniversary this August. It is an anniversary that is very special, and it is something I intend to celebrate every day.

But today we mark an anniversary that is more troubling than celebratory. Today marks the 300th day since Judge Robert Conrad was nominated to serve on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals—the 300th day. Judge Conrad was nominated in July 2007. It has been almost a year, and he still has yet to receive a hearing from the Judiciary Committee. Advise and consent. I don't think it said 300-plus days; it says advise and consent.

This is an anniversary of which I personally am not quite proud and, quite frankly, of which the Senate should be ashamed. We are telling the American people we are unable to fulfill one of the most important responsibilities for which they elect us as Senators. We are telling the American people that we cannot follow through with our constitutional responsibility of advise and consent on Federal judges.

I am not going to spend my time today pointing fingers and placing blame on one party or another. That

would be a waste of everybody's time. I am here for quite the opposite reason. We need to encourage our fellow colleagues to better utilize our limited time left in this Congress and start confirming judges to the bench.

The unfortunate reality is that our Federal bench is suffering and, most importantly, vacancies on the bench hurt the American people. I have often said there is no area of daily life that is not affected by judges. Judges make decisions every day that have a long-lasting and significant impact on the entirety of the American people.

Unfortunately, our society has become so extremely comfortable with, if not aggressive about, filing lawsuits, and we must try to reduce that problem in and of itself. But in the meantime, we need to fill these lingering vacancies in order to give judges on the bench the help they desperately need to adjudicate their rapidly increasing caseloads.

Today, we have a great opportunity for this Congress to stop pointing fingers, to stop placing blame, and reverse the dreadful trend of underperformance on Federal judges. I encourage my colleagues to rise above the bickering and come to an understanding that confirming judges should be about legal qualifications and experience.

Judge Bob Conrad now waits for the 300th day for his nomination for a judiciary hearing. He is clearly qualified to serve on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. It is almost impossible to think of a more qualified candidate. He has an excellent reputation as a knowledgeable and fair district court judge from the Western District of North Carolina.

Bob has twice—twice—been confirmed by the Senate, once in 2001 to become U.S. attorney and once in 2005 to be a U.S. district court judge—a candidate that has been confirmed by this body twice who cannot even get a Judiciary Committee hearing.

Bob received a unanimous—let me repeat that—a unanimous “well qualified” rating by the American Bar Association. Not every nominee receives a unanimous “well qualified” rating.

Bob's nomination to the Fourth Circuit Court has been endorsed by the Charlotte Observer, the Asheville Citizen-Times, and the Charleston Post and Courier. It is not the papers keeping him out of office; it is the Senate and, specifically, the Judiciary Committee.

Judge Conrad's nomination is also extremely important to North Carolina. My home State must get more representation on the Fourth Circuit Court. Our State has just one seated judge, even though we are the most populous State in the circuit.

Judge Conrad has been nominated to the Fourth Circuit Court seat. This is a seat that has been vacant for 14 years. Let me say that again. This is a judicial seat that has been vacant for 14 years. This Senate cannot fulfill its obligations to put a judge on this bench.

It is now a judicial emergency by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

I could continue to list Judge Conrad's outstanding credentials and qualifications and, more importantly, why it is critical that he be confirmed to the Fourth Circuit Court, but really, this distinguished body could use a little less talk and a little more action. It is time to act on this nomination. It is time to give Judge Conrad a hearing and a vote on the Senate floor. He has been waiting patiently for over 300 days, and that is inexcusable.

Some may think they are helping their political party by blocking qualified Presidential nominees from being considered for the Federal bench, but what they are really hurting is our country and the American people. It is not just 1 or 2 of us or 100 U.S. Senators who suffer from this lack of progress, it is all of us.

I remind all of my colleagues that they should not celebrate this 300-day anniversary; they should act on it, they should act to get Bob Conrad a hearing and to get him a vote on the Senate floor. I ask my colleagues to do this for Judge Conrad, but, more importantly, do it for the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, along with my colleague, to speak on the pending nomination of Robert J. Conrad, but I also wish to speak about the nomination of Thomas Alvin Farr to be a district court judge in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

As my great friend and colleague, Senator BURR from North Carolina, has pointed out, these nominations have reached a number of troublesome and frustrating milestones in the past few weeks. Bob Conrad has now been waiting more than 300 days—300 days—for a hearing, and Tom Farr's nomination has languished for a nearly unprecedented duration of over 500 days—500 days—without a hearing. In fact, he now holds the unenviable distinction of being the longest current pending district court nominee.

Bob Conrad and Tom Farr have both received the American Bar Association's highest rating of unanimously “well qualified” and still they await a hearing.

Bob Conrad and Tom Farr have the full support of their home State Senators. Both of their blue slips were long ago returned, and still they await a hearing.

The Eastern District seat to which Tom is nominated and the Fourth Circuit seat to which Bob Conrad has been nominated have been declared judicial emergencies by the Judicial Conference. I would add that North Carolina, the most populous State in the Circuit, has historically been significantly underrepresented on the court and presently can claim only one judge, the Honorable Allyson Duncan,

when we should have four or five. And still, these accomplished and capable candidates continue to wait hundreds of days without receiving a hearing.

The chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the distinguished Senator from Vermont, has taken time to meet both Tom Farr and Bob Conrad, and we thank him for the courtesy. Despite the chairman's having met these two thoughtful and impressive men, having heard them pledge their commitment to the law and its impartial administration, they have faced inaction by the Committee on the Judiciary.

Tom Farr and Bob Conrad are two of the most distinguished and respected legal professionals in the State of North Carolina. For his part, Tom graduated at the top of his class, summa cum laude from Hillsdale College, and went on to receive his J.D. from Emory University and his Masters of Law in Labor from the Georgetown University Law Center. Tom spent a year as the late U.S. Senator John East's Labor Committee Counsel. He also has clerked for Judge Frank Bullock of North Carolina's Middle District; served as an Adjunct Professor of Labor and Employment Law; chaired the Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Committee in North Carolina's Eastern District; and is a permanent member of the Fourth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Tom Farr has spent the majority of his career practicing employment law in Raleigh with two of our State's most important law firms. Recognized as a leader in his practice area, Tom has been selected as a Top 100 Super Lawyer for 2 years running by his colleagues and as "Legal Elite" for 5 years running by Business North Carolina. He is listed in the Martindale Hubbell Law Directory, the listing of the country's leading attorneys, and has maintained their preeminent ranking for more than a decade.

And regarding the impressive qualifications of Judge Bob Conrad, he is a magna cum laude graduate of Clemson University and received his law degree from the University of Virginia. His career and credentials are known to many in this body. The Senate confirmed him by a noncontroversial voice vote as a Judge in North Carolina's Western District, and he has served since 2006 as that court's chief judge. Bob Conrad is recognized as a judge and judicial scholar of the first order by the attorneys who appear before him and the judges with whom he works.

Indeed, both the Conrad and Farr nominations are supported by a wide array of their colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, many of whom have written the chairman to express their support for these nominees and belief in their fitness for the Federal judiciary.

In this body, we often speak of judicial nominations in terms of numbers: Number of nominees confirmed; number of days pending. And while these

numbers are important, let us not lose sight of the fact that these nominees are real people with careers and families; real people who have made sacrifices in those careers, in time spent with those families, all for the opportunity to serve their country as a Federal judge. Yes, appointment to these high offices is an honor representing the entrustment of an awesome responsibility. And the Senate's constitutional duty of advice and consent is not to be discharged lightly. But our duty must be discharged by allowing an up or down vote on these nominees.

I ask my colleagues to move forward and bring some measure of relief to the people of North Carolina's Eastern District and the Fourth Circuit. It is a simple and reasonable request. And action on the nominations of Tom Farr and Bob Conrad is long overdue.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

MR. DORGAN. Mr. President, am I listed in the order of morning business?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 25 minutes.

CORRUPTION IN IRAQ

MR. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am going to speak about energy and respond to a couple of things I heard on the Senate floor and talk about what we are going to be doing tomorrow. But first let me say I finished 2 hours of chairing a Democratic policy committee hearing in which three people testified: two previously serving with the U.S. State Department in the country of Iraq, and one, Major General Nash, who has a great deal of experience internationally.

I come away from that hearing after listening 2 hours to some very patriotic Americans, Judge Brennan and Mr. Mattil, who talked about their experience working for the State Department in Baghdad.

What I heard was unbelievable—almost unbelievable. They were there to try to be supportive of the anticorruption efforts that were underway by our Government and by Judge Radhi al-Radhi, who headed the Commission on Public Integrity in the country of Iraq. What they told me makes me almost furious.

They told me our State Department—yes, our State Department here in the United States—did everything they could to undermine the efforts of Judge al-Radhi and the Commission on Public Integrity and the section in the State Department that was in Iraq trying to root out corruption and support those who were engaged in anticorruption activity. Billions and billions of dollars have literally been stolen. The witnesses today who worked for our State Department in Iraq told us money that has gone

through the hands of the Iraqi Ministries, an unbelievably corrupt government, ends up in the hands, among other places, of the insurgents, which

then fuels the war against our soldiers. Our State Department, they say in testimony—and I encourage people to write to us and get a copy of this testimony—they say our Government and those in charge in Baghdad not only did nothing about it, but tried—because the Iraq Government, full of corrupt Ministries, was upset with the Commission on Public Integrity investigating them—it was our Government that decided to be helpful to throw Judge al-Radhi out of that country.

This is a man whom they tried to kill. They didn't like him investigating corruption in Iraq so they tried to kill him. Yet our Government paved the way for the Iraqi Government to get rid of him, to throw him out of the country.

On Thursday of this week we are going to write a bill in the Appropriations Committee. I believe the President asks for \$172 billion—that is with a "b"—\$172 billion additional, mostly for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The question is, how much of that \$127 billion going through our Defense Department and then coming into the Iraqi Ministries, how much of that is going to be wasted? How much of that is going to stick in the hands of corrupt officials in the country of Iraq?

If we could dye that money purple and track it through those who stuff it in their pockets in Iraqi Ministries and then pass it along to the insurgents as part of the take, who would we see stealing this money from the American taxpayers, and who would we see undermining the work, every day, of soldiers in Iraq?

We can't leave the country of Iraq, we are told by this administration, until there is stability. There is not going to be stability until we address the issue of corruption. As long as we will turn a blind eye to corruption—which two people from the State Department who worked in Iraq told us today—as long as we turn a blind eye to corruption, which has been done; as long as we betray—yes, betray—those who were standing up in Iraq and risking their lives to get rid of corruption, we don't stand a chance of making an inch of ground in Iraq. In fact, the witnesses today said the Special Inspector General in Iraq, in reporting to us, the Congress, and the American people about progress made in routing out corruption, that Special Inspector General was given information from those in charge in our Government in Iraq that was inaccurate because those responsible for providing the information sent the right information to the Inspector General and then it was pulled back by the State Department and they sanitized it and rewrote it to give a completely different message.

We are not even getting the truth. We are being deceived. I want everyone to read the testimony that came today from Judge Brennan and others and understand what is happening.