

and expedited consideration of his nominees. When President Obama reaches across the aisle, the Senate Republican leadership delays and obstructs his qualified nominees. I fear that Senate Republican delaying tactics will yield the lowest judicial confirmation total in modern history. If Senate Republicans continue their delaying tactics, the total could be as low as that during the 1996 session, during President Clinton's first term, when a Republican Senate majority would only allow 17 judicial confirmations, none for circuit courts.

Although there have been nearly 110 judicial vacancies this year on our Federal circuit and district courts around the country, only 10 vacancies have been filled. That is wrong. The American people deserve better. As I have noted, there are nine more qualified judicial nominations awaiting Senate action on the Senate Executive Calendar. In addition there are another four pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee that have been given hearings and could be reported to the Senate before Christmas. They will be available to be considered by the Senate once approved by the Judiciary Committee. The Senate should do better, and could if Senate Republicans would remove their holds and stop the delaying tactics.

During President Bush's last year in office, we reduced judicial vacancies to as low as 34, even though it was a Presidential election year. Judicial vacancies have now spiked. There are currently 97 vacancies on our Federal circuit and district courts, and 23 more have already been announced. This is approaching record levels. I know we can do better. Justice should not be delayed or denied to any American because of overburdened courts and the lack of Federal judges.

REMEMBERING ABE POLLIN

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the life and legacy of my friend Abe Pollin. He was a businessman, community leader, philanthropist, familyman. He was someone who simply made our community and our Nation a better place.

Abe was a great man who did great things. But he did it without a lot of fanfare. He was a team owner who thought first about the community that supported his teams. He was an employer who didn't treat his athletes or his employees as commodities—but as members of his team.

Abe Pollin was also a developer. But he didn't just invest in buildings, he invested in communities. He built one of the first big apartment buildings in Bethesda, named after his beloved wife Irene, long before Bethesda became the vibrant downtown that it is today. He never lost faith in Washington—building the MCI Center, now the Verizon Center, in the mid 1990s—which led to the revival of downtown Washington.

Here in the DC Metro area, there are few community organizations that did

not benefit from his advice, his philanthropy or his leadership. Abe made our region a better place, and will be greatly missed.

My thoughts and prayers are with the Pollin family—his wife Irene, who is a founding mother of the effort to empower women to fight heart disease, and his children and grandchildren. I will be forever grateful for the Pollin family's early support of a young city council woman from Baltimore who wanted to run for Congress. Abe Pollin was one of my earliest supporters, and his faith in me meant a great deal.

Last night, thousands of people gathered at the Verizon Center to celebrate Abe Pollin's life. His legacy is a community that is stronger, more vibrant—and simply a better place to live.

SOMALIA

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the recent suicide bombing in Somalia and the broader security situation in that region. While our attention is necessarily focused on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, this latest bombing is a stark reminder that we cannot take our eye off of the Horn of Africa.

Last week, Somalis had a reason to celebrate. The graduation of several medical students from a university in Mogadishu was a welcome glimmer of hope for the future. Unfortunately, a suicide bomber intruded, blew himself up, and killed more than 20 others, including three Ministers from the fledgling Somali transitional government. There is, seemingly, no end to the violence which has plagued Somalia for a generation.

Somalia continues to lack a truly functional government, and for several years, we have watched the slow but steady development of extremism there. Though we support the development of a moderate government for Somalia, success is far from assured. The transitional government lacks control of significant parts of the country and struggles to provide the most basic services to the Somali people.

The most significant challenge to the transitional government comes from extremist groups such as al-Shabab, a group of Islamist terrorists with deep roots in Somalia that came to prominence after the defeat of the Islamic Courts Union 3 years ago. As we have seen throughout the world, if there is a power vacuum, violent extremists will seek to fill it, and that is what is taking place in Somalia. Somalia cannot succeed while groups such as al-Shabab grow and thrive.

Al-Shabab's future depends in no small part on support from outside the country. Al-Shabab gets new recruits from all over the world, it is strengthening ties to al-Qaida and the global jihadist network, it receives support from regional actors such as Eritrea, who use al-Shabab as a proxy for its own interests. Al-Shabab will not be

defeated while this outside support continues.

For this reason, I hope that our administration will work hard to support and pass a draft resolution now circulating at the United Nations Security Council. Uganda, one of the Council's current rotating members, has drafted a resolution that addresses Eritrean support for Somali extremist groups, including al-Shabab. The resolution, which follows strong warnings to Eritrea from the U.S. and the African Union not to support al-Shabab, would ban weapon sales to Asmara, prohibit technical, financial and other assistance related to military activities, and freeze the assets of Eritrean political and military leaders as well as restrict their travel.

Al-Shabab seeks to undermine any attempt to stabilize Somalia. A volatile Somalia jeopardizes the stability of the Horn of Africa region, which is itself important to security in Africa, the greater Middle East, and the rest of the world. Support for extremist groups such as al-Shabab is unacceptable, and as long as Eritrea provides arms to al-Shabab, there will be no chance for peace in Somalia. I hope that the Security Council can take up and pass this resolution soon, and I hope the United States will be a strong supporter of this effort. Somalia ought not be a safe haven for extremists or a playground for outside powers pursuing their own agendas. Though Somalia's future is far from clear, the Security Council should have no difficulty in agreeing on the need to take steps to cut al-Shabab's lifelines of outside support.

TRIBUTE TO VIDA CHAN LIN

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, today I commemorate the beginning of an exciting chapter for the Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce. For more than 20 years, this group of entrepreneurial southern Nevadans has worked together to provide resources and promote economic growth in the Asian community. Today, they will install the first woman to be president of their esteemed organization. Vida Chan Lin steps into this role—respected by her peers and energized by her passion for furthering the goals of the Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce.

While this leadership role is a new opportunity for Ms. Lin, her lifetime of experience has prepared her to take on this role. As a child, she was exposed to running a business as she saw firsthand the daily challenges and joys in the restaurants her family owned. She then found great satisfaction in the insurance industry where she continued to exceed expectations and eventually start her own company.

Ms. Lin has always balanced her business drive and success with her commitment to community service. She has been an instrumental force behind the Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce for many years. Her ability

to bring people together, develop innovative programming, and mentor young leaders has helped ensure the long-term success of the Asian Chamber well beyond just her tenure.

She has been recognized by countless organizations for her business acumen and her heartfelt commitment to public service. I am proud to congratulate Vida Lin on this special day, and I wish her great success in the coming term of her presidency.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING WHITNEY WREATH

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, one of the great symbols of the winter holiday season we are just beginning is the wreath. Between the beautiful green needles and the fragrant smell, wreaths are reminders of a simpler time. And nowhere is the wreath more emblematic than my home State of Maine. Indeed, Maine is the largest producer of balsam fir wreaths in America, owed in large part to the tree's prevalence in our State's landscape. Furthermore, sales of these stunning wreaths contribute millions of dollars to the Maine economy. In recognition of these critical facts, I rise to honor the Whitney Wreath company, a renowned small business headquartered in Washington County.

Whitney Wreath is in its 21st season of producing fragrant and vivid green wreaths for display during the winter holidays. The company was started in 1988 when David Whitney, the company's founder, sold handmade wreaths from the back of a pickup truck during his teenage years. Two decades later, Whitney Wreath is now America's largest mail-order wreath company, selling its products through its own Web site, as well as several other catalogues and outlets including QVC. Incredibly, its wreath sales are now in the hundreds of thousands each year. The company has nine facilities throughout the State, and is in the process of building a tenth to improve productivity. And this year, despite the turbulence in our Nation's economy and an uncertain employment picture, Whitney Wreath was able to hire 250 additional employees over last season because of a substantial new contract.

Decorated with a range of colorful and timely ornaments, such as pine cones, Maine blueberries, sleigh bells, and of course bright red bows, Whitney's wreaths are nothing short of spectacular. Made using fresh Maine balsam fir, the smell of a Whitney wreath is unmistakable, and an outstanding symbol of the season it represents. The company also manufactures a range of Christmas centerpieces and the unique Maine Kissing Ball, consisting of "snow" covered pine cones combined with brilliant red berries.

Whitney Wreath has been celebrated over the years for its commitment to

quality wreaths. In 2007, the Small Business Administration honored the company with its Jeffrey H. Butland Family-Owned Business of the Year award because of the company's efforts to be involved in the community and provide critical employment opportunities to the citizens of Downeast Maine. The award also paid homage to David Whitney's other small businesses, Whitney's Blueberries and Whitney's Tool Shed.

Finally, in the spirit of the holiday season, it is fitting to acknowledge the magnanimous work Whitney Wreath is doing to support our Nation's breast cancer survivors. Last year, the company asked Facebook users to join the fight against breast cancer and for every 20 people who joined, Mr. Whitney pledged to bring special wreaths with pink ribbons to survivors of the disease. On December 22, 2008, after almost 500 people took his message to heart, David Whitney arrived at Cancer Care of Maine in Brewer with 30 special wreaths.

This year, Mr. Whitney has promised to donate 25 percent of every breast cancer awareness wreath purchased to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. The company has also announced that it will donate 20 percent of the proceeds from the sales of its Original Christmas Wreaths to the National Autism Association. As we work to combat these terrible illnesses, I am proud to have caring and thoughtful individuals like David Whitney doing their own part to encourage and support those afflicted.

A downeast staple for nearly a quarter of a century, Whitney Wreath has become a leader in its field by combining attention to detail and concern for the community. I thank David Whitney and everyone at Whitney Wreath for all they do to lift our spirits during the holiday season, and wish them many more years of success.●

TRIBUTE TO KENNETH CHRISTOPHER SATTERLEE

• Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Kenneth Christopher Satterlee, an intern in my Washington DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota over the past several months.

Kenny is a graduate of La Jolla High School in San Diego, CA. Currently he is attending the American University, where he is majoring in history. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his internship experience.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Kenny for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to

the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:15 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1319. An act to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information on a computer through certain "peer-to-peer" file sharing programs without first providing notice and obtaining consent from an owner or authorized user of the computer.

H.R. 1854. An act to amend the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 to modify an environmental infrastructure project for Big Bear Lake, California.

H.R. 2134. An act to establish the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission.

H.R. 2221. An act to protect consumers by requiring reasonable security policies and procedures to protect data containing personal information, and to provide for nationwide notice in the event of a security breach.

H.R. 2278. An act to direct the President to transmit to Congress a report on anti-American incitement to violence in the Middle East, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2711. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for the transportation of the dependents, remains, and effects of certain Federal employees who die while performing official duties or as a result of the performance of official duties.

H.R. 3224. An act to authorize the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution to plan, design, and construct a vehicle maintenance building at the vehicle maintenance branch of the Smithsonian Institution located in Suitland, Maryland, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4165. An act to extend through December 31, 2010, the authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits.

H.R. 4217. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolutions, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 199. Concurrent resolution recognizing the 10th Anniversary of the redesignation of Company E, 100th Battalion, 442d Infantry Regiment of the United States Army and the sacrifice of the soldiers of Company E and their families in support of the United States.

H. Con. Res. 206. Concurrent resolution commending the soldiers and civilian personnel stationed at Fort Gordon and their