

Reed	Scott	Udall (NM)
Reid	Sessions	Vitter
Risch	Shaheen	Walsh
Roberts	Shelby	Warner
Rockefeller	Stabenow	Warren
Rubio	Tester	Whitehouse
Sanders	Thune	Wicker
Schatz	Toomey	Wyden
Schumer	Udall (CO)	

## NAYS—2

Heller Paul

The amendment was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am hopeful and confident the next two votes will be by voice. We expect to have the next vote around 1:45 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the engrossment of the amendment and third reading of the bill.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The bill (H.R. 4152), as amended, was passed.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

# NOMINATION OF MARIA CONTRERAS-SWEET TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Maria Contreras-Sweet, of California, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask to be recognized for 3 minutes.

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

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I understand that this will be a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Thank you Madam President. I want to thank my Senate colleagues and Senator RISCH for helping us get the next Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration to the floor.

First, I want to recognize everybody's thoughts and prayers here for Oso and Darrington, WA, and for the people who have been hit by an unbelievable tragedy. Our hearts go out

to this community and I want to say that this has been a tremendous effort by first responders.

There are hundreds of volunteers, thousands of dollars of contributions. And Darrington High School students made 1,300 sandwiches to try to support the research and recovery effort. I thank them for all of their hard work.

One of the reasons I want to get a Small Business Administrator is because this agency is going to play a role in this recovery. I thank my colleague, Senator MURRAY, for her help and support.

The Small Business Administration plays an important role for communities in disasters and the woman we have before us is a well-qualified woman who can help us with this crisis and continued small business lending.

The SBA has been without an Administrator for 8 months, and it is critical that we get this position filled today. We cannot forget that small businesses create two out of three new jobs in our country—and the SBA provide \$28 million small business assistance that helps them create more jobs.

So every single day we need to think about small businesses in our community and how much we need to help and support them. Businesses, from Chobani Yogurt to Ben & Jerry's ice cream to Federal Express, have benefited from the SBA program. To have somebody like Maria Contreras-Sweet to be this person is critical for us.

I urge my colleagues to support her in this nomination and to move forward on an SBA agenda. Everything from making sure we approve the 504 program, to the STEP export assistance program, and to make sure that we continue to make ground on exporting small business products—made in the United States of America—to the growing middle-class around the globe.

I thank my colleagues and I urge them to support this nominee.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise to express my strong support for Maria Contreras-Sweet—a woman eminently qualified to serve our country as the next administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Maria Contreras-Sweet is the right person to lead the SBA given her distinguished record of public service and her deep understanding of the challenges and needs facing small businesses today.

As the founder of ProAmérica Bank, the first Latino-owned business bank in California in over 30 years and a leading financial services provider and SBA lender, she successfully expanded access to capital for small- and medium-sized businesses that often lacked access to larger, traditional financial institutions.

Just yesterday, my colleagues in the Hispanic Task Force and I met with Latino business leaders from across the Nation, and the No. 1 issue that was raised by nearly everyone in the room was the need to assist minority entrepreneurs and small business owners

with obtaining financing and access to capital—an essential function of the SBA, and one that Maria-Contreras Sweet understands first-hand.

Her commitment to supporting small businesses owners embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that makes our country great—and is exactly the kind of leadership the SBA needs.

Maria Contreras-Sweet also has a proven track record as a dedicated public servant. She previously served as secretary of the California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency, where she was the driving force behind major job creation and public investments in infrastructure and housing.

As the first Latina to serve as a cabinet secretary in the state, she managed a budget of \$14 billion and oversaw more than 40,000 employees. This is truly a remarkable nominee who brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to the Small Business Administration, as well as a compelling personal story.

Maria Contreras-Sweet, like me, has humble beginnings. As a young child, she immigrated to the United States from Guadalajara, Mexico. She settled in California, where her mother worked long hours at a chicken packaging plant to support her and her five siblings. Her family did not speak any English when they arrived, and Maria has said that it was precisely hearing no' so many times and seeing so many doors close for them that prompted her to speak up for others, to fight to level the playing field for all, and to find a way to say yes' to people with good ideas who can drive innovation who are all too often overlooked for the wrong reasons.

Maria Contreras-Sweet represents the promise of America, the fulfillment of the American Dream, and the expansion of this dream to millions more entrepreneurs and small business owners across the Nation. She is building wealth for American families and communities, and building pathways to growth and prosperity that extend far beyond the business sector.

Maria Contreras-Sweet is the right nominee for the job. I applaud President Obama for selecting her to be our nation's next SBA administrator, and I thank Leader REID for moving quickly to confirm her nomination without delay. I'm very pleased the time has finally come for good people like Maria Contreras-Sweet to get the up-or-down vote they deserve.

I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm this qualified, competent nominee without hesitation.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I am pleased to support the nomination of Maria Contreras-Sweet to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration. The SBA Administrator plays an important role in helping small businesses create jobs, mainly by making sure small businesses have access to capital. Ms. Contreras-Sweet is remarkably qualified for this position,

having founded and run a bank that focuses on making small and mid-size loans. She also served as the head of California's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. The SBA will benefit from the valuable insight Ms. Contreras-Sweet gained from this combination of experience working directly with small businesses and administering a large government agency. The experience will serve her well as SBA Administrator.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship I had the opportunity to engage Ms. Contreras-Sweet during her confirmation hearing. She impressed me with her understanding of all that it takes to launch and run a successful small business. She has the skills and the enthusiasm to help entrepreneurs drive our economic growth and create jobs.

I am happy to support Ms. Contreras-Sweet's nomination and I look forward to working with her as the SBA Administrator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Maria Contreras-Sweet, of California, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

#### PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

##### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 1:45 p.m. today the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Owens nomination—Calendar No. 573; that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination; that immediately following the cloture vote and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate resume legislative session and proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on H.R. 3979; further, if cloture is invoked on the Owens nomination, all postcloture time be considered expired at 5:30 p.m., Monday, March 31, and the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the Owens

nomination; that upon disposition of the Owens nomination, the Senate resume legislative session and, if cloture is invoked on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3979, then all postcloture time be considered expired and the Senate proceed to consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that following the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3979, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 700; that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

##### SGR

Mr. REID. Madam President, for the knowledge of all Members, 20 minutes ago or so the House passed by voice vote the—

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, the Senate is not in order. No one can hear.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is correct. The Senate is not in order. The Senate will be in order. Senators will bring their conversations to a close.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Twenty minutes ago the House passed by voice vote the 13-month patch of the SGR.

There was work done on a bipartisan basis by all Senators to get a permanent fix. We can only do what we can do. I have had a number of my Republican colleagues come to me and say: We will do this, but you have to get the assurance of the Speaker that he would accept this, and the Speaker would not accept what was being proposed. The original plan was my idea and I am very disappointed it didn't work out, but I have been trying to do it for 4 years, so I am not surprised. But it is no one's fault in the Senate.

We have a new chair of the Finance Committee. He has worked very hard on a bipartisan basis to come up with a way to get rid of this SGR once and for all. We weren't able to do that.

So the patch we have is imperfect, but it is something that will take care of things. I don't mean to be mean-spirited, but I am tired of people saying you are taking care of the doctors but no one else. We are taking care of patients for the next 13 months—patients—and I think that is extremely important. We have millions of people who have doctors who take Medicare patients. For us not to do this would have been truly unfortunate.

I am disappointed we aren't able to get a permanent fix, but we have been

able to do that. We should be very happy we have been able to do as well as we have done. I personally am not overjoyed about what is in the bill, but I am satisfied with what is in the bill. I hope we can expeditiously move and get this done today.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, the reason I come to the floor is to call attention to a crisis that has fallen off the front pages over the last few weeks; that is, the situation in our own hemisphere that is occurring in Venezuela. I recognize there have been news stories about an airplane that has been tragically potentially lost—or has been lost. We don't know the full outcome of that yet. I know the situation in Ukraine has captivated the attention of the public—and rightfully so—and I am pleased to see the Senate has taken important steps today toward addressing that issue.

I wish to speak about something that is happening in our own backyard, in our own hemisphere; in fact, something that is impacting hundreds of thousands of people who live in Florida because they have family members who still live in the country of Venezuela.

Since February 4 of this year, Venezuelans have been taking to the streets to complain about their government. These Venezuelans are from all walks of life, but they have truly been motivated by young people, by students.

The origins of this public discontent are important to understand because they are not just purely political. It in fact has to do with the dysfunction and the failures of the government that is currently in charge of that country. The statistics bear out that dysfunction and their failures. For example, violence and insecurity is among the highest in the entire Western Hemisphere. The murder rate in Venezuela was 79 per 100,000 people in 2013.

In the city of Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, the murder rate is actually almost double that. It is 122 per 100,000, making it one of the most dangerous cities on Earth. The unbridled corruption that exists in terms of how State assets are used—Venezuela is an oil-rich country. There are individuals in that government who have empowered themselves of Venezuela's oil, not their oil, and are basically giving it away to countries such as Cuba and others and using it as their own personal piggy bank for personal enrichment and to fund their governmental operations at the expense of the people of Venezuela.