

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3979, which is the Defense authorization bill—a very important piece of legislation.

I would hope that Senators would understand the quicker we get this done, the sooner we can get to the omnibus and the tax extenders and the other things we have to do before we leave.

I would note that it seems very likely we will have some votes this weekend. Everyone should understand that. If we can work a way not to have them, we will not, but I want everybody on notice that if they are not here this weekend, they could miss votes.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY ERICKSON

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when the Senate convened for the first time in April of 1789, there was a lot to do—and that is an understatement—not the least of which was to establish a system of rules to govern proceedings in the U.S. Senate. The first few weeks and months were going to be difficult, as they tried to sort out the structure and organization of this institution, but they had an idea. Two days after achieving its first quorum, the Senate selected a Secretary to oversee the day-to-day operations of what would become the world's greatest deliberative body.

The importance of this position can't be overstated. Senators and their staffs come and go, but the Secretary of the Senate provides much needed stability and support. To put things into perspective, in the entire history of this country—225 years—we have only had 32 Secretaries of the Senate. By contrast, there have been almost 2,000 Senators who have served since its inception. That number will grow, of course, come January.

For the last 8 years, Nancy Erickson has served superbly as Secretary of the Senate. But to be quite honest, that is what we expected her to do when she got this job.

I came to know Nancy when I was the assistant leader, and a friend and confidant of Senator Daschle. Every time I walked in that office, there she was, always so very, very nice. She was a pleasant person. She was always smiling.

We had some big issues, but she was always pleasant to everybody.

Her first job here in the Senate was with Tom Daschle. She became his scheduler. But given her abilities, she quickly assumed more responsibility, eventually becoming deputy chief of staff. When Senator Daschle left the Senate, Nancy transitioned to the Sergeant-at-Arms office, where she worked as a liaison to Democratic Senators and their offices.

Nancy is a native of Brandon, SD. She majored in history and government at Augustana College in Sioux Falls. She moved to Washington, DC, in 1987. Her husband Tom is from Sioux Falls. JOHN THUNE used to purchase suits from Nancy's father-in-law.

Nancy's first job here in the Senate, as I have indicated, was for Senator Daschle. In her current office, Nancy has a collection of South Dakota maps hanging on the walls, one of the railroad tracks across South Dakota in 1886, one of Watertown, SD, and she has others. She even has a Rand McNally map of a long time ago that covers the entire State.

As I indicated, when Senator Daschle left the Senate, Nancy transitioned to the Sergeant-at-Arms office where she worked as liaison to Democratic Senators and their offices. When I became leader and it was time for selecting a new secretary, I didn't look very far. I urged her to consider the position. I am glad she did. I have not regretted that decision, not for a second. She has proven herself to be an excellent manager.

Nancy has 26 departments and about 250 employees directly under her supervision, not to mention the other 6,500 Senate employees who depend on her and her office. She has been faced with some difficult times during her tenure as Secretary of the Senate. There has been a lot of roiling—sequestration, a new health care rollout, and, of course, last year's shutdown. She has confronted each difficult obstacle with skill, composure, and that wonderful smile that she has.

Nancy's success as Secretary stems not only from her excellent abilities but also from her character. She is a genuinely good person and she is very thorough, very thoughtful—I have already said that; very kind—I have already said that; very understanding—I have already said that; and something I haven't said, she is very fair.

Whether she walks the halls here or on the Senate floor, she always has a smile every place she goes. I have said that many times. That is her legacy, and it is a good legacy. I have never—never might be an exaggeration, but extremely rarely—heard her criticize anyone.

Nancy's time as Secretary of the Senate is coming to an end and she will be greatly missed. She has attended to the Senate's every need, day and night. She has earned a break, and I hope she takes one. I hope she gets to spend some time with her husband Tom, her

daughter Drew, and I can still see in my mind's eye that picture she has of little Patrick—that little tiny boy. She had that on her desk forever, and he kept getting bigger and bigger and became an athlete. We had many conversations—and I try not to boast about a lot of things, but I am always anxious to boast about my youngest son, who was a stellar athlete and played on three national championship teams at the University of Virginia—so I have watched Patrick become a college soccer player.

There will never be another Nancy Erickson here in the Senate. People like her don't come along very often. But she leaves a legacy, and it is one that will endure through the history of this great body.

So thank you, Nancy, for your service to the country.

TRIBUTE TO SHEILA DWYER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when Secretary Erickson steps down, so does the Assistant Secretary of the Senate Sheila Dwyer. Sheila has a long history in the U.S. Senate, but Sheila's time started long ago—and I am not going to talk about how long ago, but she was a Senate page during the time, of course, when she was in high school. But after her semester as a page, she, like all these young pages who are here for a semester, returned home to Connecticut. She loves to boast about the great State of Connecticut, and I have listened to her do that for many years. But her heart has always been with the Senate from the time she was a page, and so she returned after her education.

Sheila got a degree from Suffolk University. She returned to the Senate in many different capacities, but we have had wonderful conversations about her time with Chuck Robb. She is a family friend of the Robbs—and I mean a family friend—very close to them. She later worked for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

I talked to his widow within the past couple of weeks. What a unique man Senator Moynihan was. There is a new book out about him, and I have asked my staff to get a copy of it, which talks about this unusual man. I am anxious to read it because he was brilliant, but also he had a few—he was eccentric in some ways. And Sheila loves to tell privately—and I will not repeat here on the floor—some of the things he did that would appear to a lot of us to be a little bit eccentric. But that was part of his unique quality and she handled him so well—as well as anyone could.

She worked for another man with a huge personality: Senator Fritz Hollings. He would, even though he is over 90 years old, still be here in the Senate except his wife became ill. He is physically strong today, bright of mind, and I can hear this man's voice from where he stood. What a voice he had, a man who was the epitome of what a Senator

should look like. He was a handsome man. I repeat, he had this great voice, and he was very tall, stood very erect. I was always very envious of how he could stand so tall, and he has such a sense of humor that is quite remarkable. Sheila is his friend. She visits him in his home in South Carolina now, and she has helped me keep in touch with Fritz Hollings.

Then she worked for me. I was so fortunate. I was looking for someone to do my fundraising during a very difficult election I had before me. I knew who I wanted, but I didn't know that I could get her. Well, we worked things out. And it wasn't just because I offered her more money, it was because she wanted to work with me, and I am so happy that came to be.

For 14 years, she has been part of my team—and I mean part of my team. During that entire time, she has done an incredible job doing my Senate business as a candidate. Doing Senate business here as the Assistant Secretary, she has been the best.

So after having worked for the Senators I have mentioned, including me, when the time came to fill the role of Assistant Secretary of the Senate, she was a perfect candidate, and in this position she has not disappointed me once.

Everyone who has ever worked with Sheila knows she is a meticulous planner. If you want something done—an event—and done right—and I mean done right: help setting up the program, what the flowers are going to look like, what the food is going to be, what time it should start, what time it should end—and she is very, very precise on when it should start and when it should end—we learned that last night during a farewell for a number of Democratic Senators—she really spares no effort, leaves no detail unattended.

Her time here in the Secretary's office has been a smashing success. It is not easy to attend to the needs of 100 Senators—100 Senators—Democrats, Republicans, Independents, their families and staffs, but Sheila handles it with skill and with grace. That is why many call her the “Mayor of Capitol Hill,” and for good reason.

Whether she is escorting the President's daughter to the inauguration podium in her bright pink coat, or planning a ceremonial dinner in Statuary Hall, Sheila does the job exceptionally well.

Just one example, 2 years ago the Senate hosted the screening of Steven Spielberg's now legendary film, “Lincoln.” There were some real big-shots there. Spielberg, Daniel Day Lewis, the guy that wrote the script—they were all there. So there were, frankly, a lot of prima donnas there, including of course all the Senators. So it was an exceptionally difficult feat to pull off, coordinating attendance for 100 Senators who all wanted to go to see these famous people.

She was preparing a panel discussion for the cast and crew, all while fol-

lowing strict Capitol protocols as to who could go where and what we could do in the places we went. But she had a secret weapon, and that was she. She didn't know it, but that was the secret weapon. She took care of every possible problem and coordinated every single detail, even down to a makeshift concession stand in the lobby. It was a wonderful event, a marvelous event, because for the briefest moment it brought the Senate together in the spirit of unity that we haven't had in some time. It all happened because of her.

She is very devoted to her family, her mom Lois, about whom she has talked endlessly, and of course her deceased father. I was trying to help in comforting her as I could when she lost her mom Lois. I can't imagine how proud her parents would be—and are, from wherever they are, looking down on us—at the work that Sheila has done in her life. I know how proud I am of her now, as she prepares to move on to her next chapter of life, and I will do everything I can to help that chapter be a good one. I wish her the best.

I, along with the entire Senate, thank her for the steadfast diligent service she has rendered as Assistant Secretary for the last 8 years.

Sheila has a dog she loves, little Ava, and I hope she takes that little dog on a trip to have a good time. I am sure she will.

On a personal note, I wish to say publicly how much she has meant to me. She has been really a part of my family the last 15 years. As most everyone knows, my wife was involved in a really bad accident. Who was there? Sheila. Battling, as she did for 1½ years, ravaging breast cancer, who was there? I would come home after having been unable to do the things around the house. I would have a refrigerator full of food. Not junk—it was wonderful food. She did that not once, not twice, but many, many times. She is my friend—my forever friend.

She interacts with my children as if they were her siblings. She knows everything about them. So even though I will not see her at work every day, as I have for 14 or 15 years, she will always be part of my life.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO SAXBY CHAMBLISS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about my friend and colleague, Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS.

SAXBY, as we all know, is the ultimate southern gentleman. He is a man of his word. He is blessed with the charm and the drawl only a Georgian could possess, and he is far too modest. He shouldn't be. He has a lot to be

proud of as he looks back at a storied career here in Congress.

We are talking about one of our Nation's top experts on intelligence and national security. We are talking about a standout champion for the men and women of our military. We are also talking about a Senator who became chair of the Agriculture Committee just 2 years into his first term. That is really quite an accomplishment. But once you get to know SAXBY, it isn't all that surprising.

Before he came to Congress, SAXBY was a smalltown ag lawyer. He still lives in a rural area—a peanut and cotton-farming region far removed from the bright lights of Atlanta. SAXBY has a feel for the issues that could only be acquired from actual on-the-ground experience. He understands the real-world impact of what we discuss here in Washington, and he cares.

On top of that, he has the disciplined work ethic of a minister's son—which makes sense, because he is one. SAXBY is usually the first guy to raise his hand when there is an assignment no one else wants. That is what we saw for him on the Gang of 6, a politically difficult and work-intensive committee if there ever was one.

But SAXBY came here to get things done—not to posture. He takes on projects with the kind of drive and courage we don't often see.

How courageous is SAXBY? Well, he accepted an invitation to go quail hunting with Vice President Cheney, and he lived to tell the tale. The senior Senator from South Carolina remembers the trip very well. He had to be persuaded by SAXBY to come. He still suspects that SAXBY's real motive was to give Cheney a second target.

It wasn't the only time SAXBY cheated death with the Vice President. Lindsey recalls a meeting in Baghdad with SAXBY, JOE BIDEN, and the Iraqi Prime Minister. Afterward, they boarded a plane and came under fire. Here is what SAXBY said: “I guess the meeting didn't go that well.”

So SAXBY is a comedian. But he is also courageous. He is also persuasive. He is really good at getting his way. It is kind of what we would expect from a former door-to-door fruitcake salesman. After hawking loaves of spiced dough, there is not much SAXBY can't sell at this point.

We know he was persuasive enough to convince Julianne to marry him. SAXBY and Julianne met at the University of Georgia. She was Sigma Chi's pledge-class sweetheart—and she soon became SAXBY's sweetheart. The Chamblisses have been inseparable ever since.

Now, just in case SAXBY ever becomes his own category on Jeopardy, here is an interesting piece of trivia. The president of the same pledge class became SAXBY's Democrat challenger in 2008. The two fraternity brothers are still friendly. Here is how this gentleman remembered SAXBY from college. He said he “looked old.”