

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE
CALENDAR

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of the House message with respect to H.R. 3979, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 697, 632, 1055, 542, 637, 1051, 1057, 791, 1102; that there be 2 minutes for debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to each vote; that upon the use or yielding back of time the Senate proceed to vote with no intervening action or debate on the nominations in the order listed; that any rollcall votes, following the first in the series, be 10 minutes in length; that if any nomination is confirmed, 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 to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO JOHN WALSH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to take a few moments to thank a Senator who will be leaving at the end of this term: Senator JOHN WALSH of Montana.

Though only in the Senate a brief time, Senator WALSH brought his wealth of experience to the work here and fought the good fight. Serving 33 years in the Montana Army National Guard, he brought his bravery and courage into the Senate. JOHN WALSH supported the Paycheck Fairness Act and was one of the original cosponsors of the Bring Jobs Home Act. He lived up to the values he was fighting for in the military by standing for workers here.

I thank him for his service and friendship and wish him the best in all his future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY ERICKSON
AND SHEILA DWYER

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President I would like to take a moment to thank

a woman whom most Americans do not know but whose name is well-known to every employee of the United States Senate because—among other reasons—she signs our paychecks. Nancy Erickson will be leaving the Senate at the end of this session.

For the last 7 years, Nancy has served as the Secretary of the United States Senate. All told, she has worked for the Senate for 26 years.

For those who may not know, the Secretary of the Senate is this body's top appointed position. It is like being CEO of a large corporation. The Secretary oversees two dozen departments—from payroll and printing to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Nancy Erickson is the 32nd person—and the sixth woman—to hold that position. Nancy is a consummate professional who has won the respect of Senators on both sides of the aisle. She is unfailingly cheerful and unflappable.

Nancy Erickson loves the United States Senate even more than she loves the Green Bay Packers—and that is saying a lot. Nancy got the political bug early. As a fifth grader in Brandon, SD, she campaigned door-to-door for South Dakota Senator George McGovern in his 1972 Presidential campaign. She moved to Washington, DC, after college to work for the Government Accountability Office, which was then known as the General Accounting Office. After 2 years of desperate homesickness, she was ready to pack her bags and head back to South Dakota when she got a better offer.

A young South Dakota congressman with a bright future offered her a job as his scheduler. His name was Tom Daschle. Over the next 16 years Tom Daschle moved from serving as a House Member to Senator to Senate majority leader. Nancy moved up the ladder, too, eventually becoming Senator Daschle's deputy chief of staff. When Senator Daschle left the Senate in 2005, Senator REID immediately snapped Nancy up to serve as his representative to the Senate Sergeant at Arms. Two years later Senator REID became majority leader and asked Nancy to serve as the Secretary of the Senate. Nancy calls being Secretary of the Senate her "pinch me job."

Over the course of her 26-year Senate career, there have been traumatic moments. On the morning of September 11, 2001, Nancy was at her desk in the Capitol when Capitol Police rushed in and ordered that the building be evacuated immediately, fearful that the Capitol was under terrorist attack.

One month later Nancy was one of 28 people in the Senate who were exposed to anthrax when a letter carrying the deadly bacteria was opened in Senator Daschle's office. Experts estimated that the affected staffers were exposed to between 1,000 and 3,000 times the lethal dose of anthrax. Fortunately, with expert medical assistance, no one in the Senate was seriously injured in the anthrax attack.

To walk back into the Capitol the day after 9/11 took courage. To keep

coming back after living through a potentially deadly anthrax attack required not just courage but a true devotion to public service and a love of this Senate.

You can see Nancy's love of this Senate and its history in the exquisitely restored Old Senate Chamber, whose renovation occurred on Nancy's watch. You can see her love of the Senate in the ongoing restoration of the Capitol's magnificent Brumidi Corridors, a project that Nancy has championed.

You can see Nancy Erickson's reverence for the U.S. Senate in a massive portrait of one of the giants of Senate history, former Kentucky Senator Henry Clay. That painting, measuring 11 by 7 feet, was discovered a few years ago in a storage room in New York State. The paint was peeling, and there were holes in the canvas created when a high school had used it as a basketball backboard. Nancy spearheaded the effort to procure and restore that lost masterpiece. Today, the painting of the Senate's "Great Compromiser" hangs just off the Senate floor—a reminder to all of us of the noble art of principled compromise. We thank you, Nancy, for that reminder and for your many years of service to this Senate and to America.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge Sheila Dwyer, who has served as Assistant Secretary of the Senate since 2007. Majority Leader HARRY REID, who paid tribute to Sheila on the Senate floor yesterday, appointed her to this post. Sheila has done an outstanding job overseeing the departments within the Office of the Secretary and assisting in the day-to-day legislative, financial, and administrative operations of the Senate. Sheila never forgets the little touches, or as any Democratic Senator can tell you, the meals that make the U.S. Senate an enjoyable place to work.

Sheila first came to Washington, DC, in 1980 as a House page for Speaker Tip O'Neil. Immediately after graduating from Suffolk University in Boston, she returned to DC and was hired to work in New York Governor Mario Cuomo's Washington office. She went on to work for Senators Charles Robb and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Sheila was responsible for logistics of not one—but two—Democratic national conventions. The first was in 1992 in New York City. Then at the 1996 convention in Chicago, I chaired the Illinois Delegation as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, and Sheila Dwyer once again kept the logistics for the event moving smoothly.

It has been an honor to work with Sheila for all these years, and I wish her the best as she begins a new chapter in her life.

To Nancy and to Sheila, thank you for sharing so much of your time and talent with this Senate. We will miss you both.

TRIBUTE TO KAY HAGAN

Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, I rise today to honor my colleague from North Carolina, Senator KAY HAGAN, who is departing from the Senate at the end of this year. Senator HAGAN has been a strong voice for North Carolina's families, first during her decade in the North Carolina State Senate and during her service here in the United States Senate. Over the last two years, I have been consistently impressed with Senator HAGAN's compassion for and advocacy on behalf of her constituents and her willingness to forge the tough, bipartisan compromises that our country needs.

KAY actually first came to the Senate in the 1970s as an intern in the Capitol, where she operated the elevator that continues to carry Senators to and from the Chamber. After finishing her college education and pursuing her law degree, KAY became an attorney for North Carolina National Bank and eventually became a vice president in the estates and trust division.

Senator HAGAN's business and banking experience has been a tremendous asset during her time as a member of the banking committee, where we serve together. Senator HAGAN's understanding of the housing finance system and commitment to affordable housing was invaluable as she and I worked together with a bipartisan group of committee members to draft and advance legislation reforming the system to make sure the American taxpayer is protected and made whole. During the debate Senator HAGAN used her expert knowledge of the industry to craft a commonsense, bipartisan solution. Our proposal makes sure taxpayers are never left holding the bill again, while preserving the 30-year mortgage and supporting affordable housing—a huge accomplishment.

Senator HAGAN comes from a family and a State with a rich military history. Her father and brother both served in the Navy, and her husband, Chip, is a Navy Vietnam veteran. She has diligently supported and honored servicemembers and veterans as a member of the Armed Services Committee. She visited North Carolina troops in the Middle East to better understand their mission and needs, and she helped found the Military Family Caucus to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by those with loved ones abroad. In conjunction with her work on the small business committee, she introduced legislation to reduce veteran unemployment by providing employers a work opportunity tax credit for hiring a member of the National Guard.

As a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Senator HAGAN has consistently fought to make sure America's children have the education, tools, and resources to build a better tomorrow. In fact, Senator HAGAN's first bill was on a subject very dear to

me—financial literacy. Far too many young Americans fall victim to financial scams or take out too many loans because they haven't been given an adequate education on personal finances. Senator HAGAN's legislation—which she has pressed every Congress—would have helped States integrate financial literacy into middle- and high school curriculums. That is the kind of commonsense legislation Senator HAGAN is known for and Congress should be passing.

Senator HAGAN has been an outstanding public servant for the people of North Carolina. Although I am saddened to see such a well-respected female colleague depart from the Senate, I know Kay will continue to be a champion for North Carolina's families in the years ahead, and I wish her all the best.

AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE FAA MODERNIZATION AND REFORM ACT

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I join my colleague Senator INHOFE in the passage of S. 2614. This legislation corrects a glitch in the law that was doing great harm to 100,000 American Airlines employees, including approximately 10,000 employees working out of or residing in Ohio. Ninety-five percent of these workers were unionized.

We are talking about pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, ramp workers, and dispatchers, all unionized. Part of the collective bargaining agreement was a defined benefit pension plan. These are plans where you earn benefits through your hard work, and those benefits provide you with annuitized income for life.

When American Airlines went bankrupt, these workers all received a single lump sum payment. For pilots, these payments were as much as \$162,000, but the average payment was \$120,000. For other workers, these payouts were much, much less.

Now, \$162,000 may sound like a lot of money, and it is a lot. But not when it is meant to take the place of your entire pension for what could easily be a 20- or 30-year retirement. What we have done in the past for employees at United, Delta, Northwest, and US Airways is allow them to roll this entire amount over into an Individual Retirement Account or IRA.

It is important to understand what this is. When you roll over, you generally do not pay tax on it until you withdraw it from the new plan. The assets in the account continue to grow tax deferred. Deferred is the operative word.

This does not mean that the employees do not pay taxes. It means they will pay them as they make withdrawals to finance their own retirement. This bill is needed to give the American Airlines' employees that same opportunity. It is a simple fix, and it is the least we can do for workers who work hard and play by the

rules, but lost their pensions through no fault of their own.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN AHLBERG

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, as I prepare to depart the Senate, I would like to take a few minutes to express my deep appreciation to Brian Ahlberg, my chief of staff for the last decade. Of course, every Senator knows that the title "chief of staff" encompasses a vast range of roles and responsibilities—counselor, confidant, kibitzer, trouble-shooter, day-to-day manager, strategic planner, and, in Brian's case, trusted friend. Brian has excelled in all of these critical roles, and I am very grateful to him.

Knut Rockne was fond of saying: "I've found that prayers work best when you have big players." As Senators, we know that it is not enough to be on the side of the angels; we have got to have big players. For me, that means big intellect, big work ethic, big heart. And those are qualities that Brian Ahlberg possesses in superabundance.

Brian originally joined my staff in 2003 as legislative director, after a decade of service in that role and others for my great friend Senator Paul Wellstone. In short order, I promoted him to chief of staff, and he has served in that role with enormous skill and professionalism ever since.

Staff directors on committees have the challenge of managing large staffs. As chief of staff, Brian has had what is arguably an even bigger challenge: managing me. He has done so with great loyalty, intelligence, tact, and consistently good judgment. He is the proverbial calm amidst every storm. When my Irish is up, Brian's Norwegian cool serves as a calming counterweight. He has never hesitated to speak up when he thinks I am wrong or misguided—an invaluable service. He has done a great job of allowing me, as Senator, to get into just enough trouble to be effective in my own job.

It has been said, perhaps only half jokingly, that Senators are a constitutional impediment to the smooth functioning of staff. I long ago learned to get out of Brian's way and let him manage my far-flung operation. We call ourselves Team Harkin—staffers on my Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, on my Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, and on my personal staff, both in Washington and back in Iowa. Brian is the impresario who skillfully coordinates their work as a single, collaborative team, skillfully resolving conflicts and keeping people focused on the mission at hand. I believe that Brian's skill in this role is a major reason for Team Harkin's remarkable legislative productivity over the last decade.

Brian has a great way of keeping my staff and me focused on what is truly important and strategic, avoiding detours and sidetracks. In meetings and