

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am objecting to consideration of the nomination of Brodi Fontenot to be Chief Financial Officer of the Treasury Department.

In May 2014, I found out about questionable hiring practices at the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, known as FinCEN. The problem occurred after the agency posted job requirements for openings in the enforcement division. Eligible candidates were disqualified for a criterion that was never in the original job posting: a law degree. This is illegal under Federal hiring guidelines.

In the process, FinCEN rejected qualified veterans who applied for the positions. Instead, FinCEN hired three former Federal prosecutors for the positions. Veterans preference doesn't guarantee veterans a job, but it does give them extra consideration for jobs for which they are qualified. The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is significantly higher than the rate for the general population. These men and women are extremely capable. They have an array of job skills to offer in the workplace. It is inexcusable for FinCEN or any other Federal agency to reject qualified veterans who faithfully served our country. Our veterans deserve better from the Obama administration.

As part of my investigation, I requested all emails sent between the Treasury Department and FinCEN pertaining to this issue. To date, I have received a total of four emails. The Treasury Department has tried to convince me that no other relevant emails exist, but I am still not convinced. Their search was limited to only the 8 months when the vacancy announcements were open. This excluded any email communications that took place in preparation for posting the announcements or during 2014 when problems with the announcements were found.

As a result, I placed a hold on the former Assistant Secretary for Management at the Treasury Department who was nominated to be Deputy Secretary at HUD. Instead of simply providing the requested documents so that I could release the hold, former Majority Leader REID ignored what was done to veterans and pushed through the nomination over my objections.

In January 2015, I requested any emails sent between FinCEN and main Treasury using alternate email and handheld devices, as well as any email messages that were printed and saved by FinCEN but no longer retained in the electronic email system. The response from the Treasury Department outlined the Federal Government's records retention regulations but did not include any of the requested documents.

This is unacceptable. Therefore, I am objecting to consideration of Mr. Fontenot's nomination.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I was unable to cast a vote on the nomination of Dr. Dava Newman to be the Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. I missed the vote yesterday because I was meeting with turkey growers in Minnesota who are struggling with the avian influenza outbreak, and I attended the funeral services for my long-time friend, colleague and mentor, John Mooty. My vote would not have changed the outcome and had I been present I would have voted in support of Dr. Newman's nomination.

The work being done at NASA pushes the boundaries of innovation, science, and exploration, and it is critical we have strong leaders like Dr. Newman in place to lead those initiatives. Dr. Newman is well known for her cutting-edge work in developing the next generation of space suits. As a professor of aeronautics and astronautics and engineering systems at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Newman will bring a strong academic, research, and technical background to this position. As a member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, I supported Dr. Newman's nomination when it was considered by the committee earlier this year. I am pleased that Dr. Newman was confirmed by the Senate to be the Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

STEVE GLEASON ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I support the Steve Gleason Act, which passed the Senate last week. I would especially like to thank Senator VITTER for championing this important legislation that will ensure patients on Medicare have access to critical speech-generating devices.

I am so glad that we were able to come together to pass this bipartisan bill and take an important step toward giving patients their voices back.

For Americans affected by debilitating diseases, speech-generating devices aren't a luxury—they are a lifeline. Without these devices, many people who are suffering from diseases like ALS and Parkinson's can't communicate with their family members, caregivers and friends. Many patients use their devices in conjunction with eye gaze technology because they no longer have use of their hands, arms, and other parts of their body. And these new technologies allow patients to use the Internet and email—technologies most of us take for granted but are crucial to help keep patients connected with their communities.

Unfortunately, recent policy changes have threatened patients' access to these important devices and associated technologies.

Under the new policy, Medicare will stop paying for speech-generating devices if a patient is admitted to a hos-

pital, nursing facility, or hospice. It is at this time that patients are most vulnerable and most in need of being able to communicate with their doctors, caregivers, and loved ones.

I have heard heartbreaking stories of patients who have lost their ability to communicate when they enter a care facility. One person told of having to put her mother in hospice care. When her mother entered hospice, Medicare would no longer cover her mother's device. The daughter was devastated that she could no longer understand what her mother was saying. She could tell how frustrated her mother was by this new isolation, but she was helpless to do anything about it.

I have also heard from people who have decided to forego treatment in hospice or a nursing home because they would rather suffer at home than lose their voice. This is simply unacceptable.

That is why I have worked with Senator VITTER to restore full access to speech-generating devices for those who need them.

The Steve Gleason Act will ensure that patients have continuous access to their speech-generating devices, no matter where they are receiving treatment. And the bill will allow patients to use eye-tracking technology with their devices—technology that is vital for patients who can no longer use their arms or hands.

Ultimately, these changes will ensure that Americans who have been robbed of their ability to speak by diseases like ALS aren't also robbed of relationships with their caregivers and loved ones.

Again, I thank my colleagues in the Senate for passing this important bill and I urge the House to pass this legislation and give patients their voices back.

REMEMBERING SHAWN PHILLIP SOMITS

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, today I honor the life and service of Shawn Phillip Somits of Muncy, PA, a Federal corrections officer at USP Allenwood and a U.S. Army veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, whose life tragically ended on April 2, 2015.

Shawn Somits was born on July 1, 1975, in Williamsport, PA, the son of John and Charlotte Somits, of Muncy. Shawn was a 1994 graduate of Muncy High School and attended both Penn College and Bucknell University. In 2003, Shawn married his wife, Daisy, and welcomed the birth of his first child, Faith. At this time, Shawn was dutifully serving his country in OIF/OEF in the U.S. Army, where he was deployed to both Iraq and Kuwait from February 2003 until April of 2004. Upon his return from deployment in 2004, Shawn entered into Federal service with the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Prisons as a corrections officer at USP Allenwood,

where he would serve for nearly 11 years.

Shawn Somits' life ended suddenly and tragically on April 2, 2015, following a long battle with post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, suffered as a result from his combat service. He is survived by his wife, Daisy, and their two children, Faith and Wesley.

Today I express my condolences to the family of Shawn Somits and honor Shawn's service to his country both as a combat veteran and a Federal law enforcement officer. Tragic losses such as this provide us a chance to reflect on the sacrifices dedicated public servants like Shawn make in order to keep us all safe from harm. Shawn Somits was a dedicated soldier, officer, husband, and father. His loss leaves a deep void in the lives of those who knew and loved Shawn.

MONROE COUNTY, OHIO BICENTENNIAL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I honor Monroe County, OH, as it celebrates its bicentennial anniversary. On January 29, 1813, an act to form the County of Monroe made up of parts of Belmont, Washington, and Guernsey Counties was passed by the Ohio Legislature.

Although Monroe County had already been established, it did not function as a county until it was officially organized in 1815. On February 3, 1815, an act was passed by the Ohio Legislature to attach another part of Washington County to Monroe County and to organize Monroe into a separate county. The act went into effect on March 1, 1815, which was when Monroe began to formally function as a county. Residents named the county in honor of James Monroe, who at the time was U.S. Secretary of State and eventually became the fourth President of the United States. However, the official bicentennial celebration begins this month since the first Monroe County officials were elected in April of 1815.

I congratulate the citizens of Monroe County and all who are involved in planning the yearlong celebration, which will feature a variety of events recognizing 200 years of history and heritage throughout Monroe County.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SAFETY WEEK

• Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the construction industry plays a major role in promoting economic growth, employing workers across a variety of trades, and literally building communities. It is a noble profession, yet today it remains one of the most dangerous occupations. Building codes and workplace safety regulations have made great strides but there is more to be done. We all share a responsibility to ensure that men and women who

offer their most valuable asset—their labor—not only earn fair wages but also work in safe environments so they can safely return home after every shift.

I am proud that in my hometown of Portland, OR, various public, private and nonprofit stakeholders have formed the SafeBuild Alliance to promote and share best practices for worksite safety. This collaboration is so important because we know that with proper planning, communication and controls, reducing workplace injuries and fatalities is not only possible, it is already happening.

The SafeBuild Alliance is leading the way with its Zero Incidents Through Collaboration initiative, which facilitates safe performance by promoting the sharing of best practices among industry professionals. From general contractors to property owners, public and private entities, architects and engineers, to building and construction trade associations, industry vendors and insurers—everyone has a role in promoting safe worksites.

It is my great privilege to recognize the Safebuild Alliance for their work and advocacy for safe workplaces on behalf of all our workers engaged in the construction industry. Safety must be priority No. 1, every job, every day. And to further heighten awareness, I am pleased to offer my support in the official observance of May 3 to 9, 2015 as Construction Industry Safety Week.●

REMEMBERING DICK GINSBURG

• Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to honor an icon in Oregon's legal community and a long-time friend who passed away on March 1. Dick Ginsburg was a long-time resident of the small Washington County community of Cornelius, and a founding member of the Oregon chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, AILA. Dick was one of those rare human beings who brought both reason and compassion to every issue on which he worked. And I know everyone who met Dick will always remember his engaging smile, his joyful enthusiasm and that infectious laughter—regardless of the issue.

Dick often referred to the lifelong impact he felt from his experience in the Peace Corps in Paraguay, surely much of it attributable to his loving wife of 40 years who he met there, Rosalia. Along with their wonderful children, Brian and Laura, the Ginsburg family was always exceptionally generous and created an extended family, not only in Oregon, but everywhere he went.

As a friend during my early days at Legal Aid, Dick showed himself to be a thoughtful, compassionate, and dedicated lawyer. He understood the intricacies of immigration law and devoted his life to making it work with equal justice for businesses and people alike.

While Dick will be remembered by all whose lives he touched, I will espe-

cially remember my friend as a mentor, a guiding force, and one of those people who made the world a better place just for being here.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, 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 which were referred to the appropriate committees.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. ALEXANDER, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, without amendment:

S. 1124. An original bill to amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to improve the Act.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. HELLER (for himself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 1105. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize per diem payments under comprehensive service programs for homeless veterans to furnish care to dependents of homeless veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself and Mr. WARNER):

S. 1106. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to allow the Secretary of Education to award Early College Federal Pell Grants; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SCHUMER:

S. 1107. A bill to provide for an equitable management of summer flounder based on geographic, scientific, and economic data and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. HELLER):

S. 1108. A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to include court security officers in the public safety officers' death benefits program; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 1109. A bill to require adequate information regarding the tax treatment of payments under settlement agreements entered into by Federal agencies, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. ENZI (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. 1110. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to publish in the Federal Register a strategy to significantly increase the