

Greenwell received her certification as a boat operator, or coxswain, in just 1 year—a process that normally takes about a year and a half. Her colleagues say that she demonstrated an outstanding level of skill and professionalism throughout the rigorous certification process.

She has also served as a mentor to junior personnel and assisted multiple shipmates in receiving their qualifications as watch standers, boat crew members, boarding team members, and as coxswains. Petty Officer Greenwell's commitment to her team and the public she serves every day exemplifies—truly exemplifies—the Coast Guard's core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

Petty Officer Greenwell, I just want you to know tonight that your service to our Nation has taken you around the world, and I know you will continue to go far—both literally and figuratively—in all your endeavors. Every day, you help to ensure the safety of your fellow Americans and the security of our Nation. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your tireless dedication, your invaluable service to the State and the Nation that we call home, and as we say in the Navy, “Bravo Zulu.”

Finally, to the thousands of brave men and women across the Department of Homeland Security who dedicate their lives to serving and protecting America and Americans, please know that what you do every day is important. I hope it fills your work with meaning and your life with happiness. On behalf of the people we all serve together, thank you for your service.

Sometimes we ask people—whether the Coast Guard or Department of Homeland Security, any part of the Federal Government—what they would like. Sometimes people say they would like more money, they would like more of this, or they would like more of that. What more than half the people say, though, is, I would just like to be thanked.

So to all the people I mentioned tonight and those with whom they serve at the Department of Homeland Security, thank you, and God bless you.

I especially thank my colleague from Ohio for his generosity and kindness tonight.

To the leader, good work. “Bravo Zulu” on the good work done here this week.

I yield the floor.

TRADE PREFERENCES EXTENSION ACT OF 2015

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I rise to commend my colleagues on passage of the Trade Preferences Extension Act of 2015. This legislation provides timely extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, Program, and preferential treatment for products from Haiti. And, this legislation finally reauthorizes the Generalized System of Preferences, or GSP,

Program which has languished since July of 2013. I am very pleased we have been successful in this effort.

Trade preference programs are vitally important to the economies of the beneficiary countries, supporting economic and social development. And, these programs support production here in the U.S. as many of the goods eligible under preference programs are raw materials and inputs that fuel American manufacturing. These programs build a trading relationship that is the first stepping stone towards developing a full, bilateral trading relationship that will further grow and support the U.S. economy. Particularly for some of our trading partners benefiting under the AGOA Program, we look forward to our trading relationship developing to the next phase, full bilateral trade agreements, during this authorization of the program.

But none of this would have been possible without the dedicated work of many people. I would like to recognize the staff of the Senate Finance Committee. I would like to recognize Senator WYDEN and his staff, especially Joshua Sheinkman, Jayme White, Elissa Alben, Greta Peisch, and Anderson Heiman. Our work was supported by the outstanding efforts of the International Trade Commission and the Office of the United States Trade Representative. I would like to particularly thank Florie Liser, Constance Hamilton, Behnaz Kibria, Bill Jackson, and Ben Kostrzewa from the Office of the USTR.

I would like to especially thank my staff for all their dedicated work on this legislation. Our international trade staff has worked tirelessly on this legislation and I thank them for their efforts: Everett Eissenstat, Shane Warren, and Rebecca Eubank. We have had the excellent support of detailees from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Kevin Rosenbaum, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Andrew Rollo, as well as Sahra Park Su and Kenneth Schmidt. I would like to thank my senior staff: Chris Campbell, Mark Prater, Jay Khosla, Jeff Wrase, and Bryan Hickman.

We can all be proud of the broad support this bill has received in both Houses of Congress. This legislation demonstrates that trade is a bipartisan issue. I look forward to President Obama signing this legislation into law as soon as possible.

CONGRATULATING RAMSEY LEWIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to congratulate a native son of Chicago who has earned worldwide acclaim as a jazz pianist and who will soon achieve a lifelong dream of conducting and soloing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Ramsey Lewis is a true American original—a virtuoso pianist and musical innovator who helped pioneer the sound many refer to as “smooth jazz.” Fifty-one years ago he and his band,

the Ramsey Lewis Trio, recorded a song that became an instant sensation and which remains a definitive classic of the cool jazz genre. It's called “The In Crowd.” You know the refrain: “I'm in with the in crowd. I go where the in crowd goes.”

That song was recorded live at Bohemian Caverns in Washington, DC, with almost no rehearsal. It sounds like a fable but it is true. That afternoon Ramsey and his bandmates—drummer Isaac “Redd” Holt and bassist Eldee Young—were sitting in a Washington, DC, coffee shop, debating what they could add to their set that night to make the recording stand out. Their waitress, a woman by the name of Nettie Gray, asked what was wrong. They explained their predicament.

Miss Nettie Gray walked over to the jukebox, dropped a coin in the slot and said: “Listen to this.” It was “The In Crowd,” sung by Dobie Gray—a popular hit at the time. The trio quickly worked out a jazz arrangement and used the song to end their set that evening. The crowd loved it. Audiences everywhere loved it. “The In Crowd” became the first of seven gold records by the Ramsey Lewis Trio.

What makes that story even more amazing is that “The In Crowd” was just one of four albums the Ramsey Lewis Trio recorded that year, 1964. Talk about prolific.

All told, this jazz legend has recorded 80 albums in an illustrious career that has spanned more than half a century. He has earned 3 Grammy Awards, 7 gold records, and hosted a nationally syndicated radio show and a 13-episode “Legends of Jazz” TV series on PBS.

In addition, he has served as artistic director of Jazz at Ravinia since 1992. He also helped organize Ravinia's Jazz Mentor Program. He serves on the board of trustees for the Merit School of Music in Chicago and The Chicago High School for the Arts. And a decade ago he created the Ramsey Lewis Foundation to help connect at-risk children to the world of music.

Many artists might decide that such a resume was long and impressive enough—but not Ramsey Lewis. At the age of 80, Ramsey Lewis is preparing to fulfill the dream of a lifetime. On August 8, he will serve as conductor and soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival in Highland Park, IL, just outside of Chicago.

Ravinia is the oldest music festival in North America. Over the years it has hosted such musical giants as Louis Armstrong, Pablo Casals, Aaron Copland, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, George Gershwin, Luciano Pavarotti, and Yoyo Ma. It is also the summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Ramsey Lewis' debut as conductor and soloist with the CSO is a testament to his musical genius and dexterity. It is also a testament to his ability to see beyond narrow expectations about what is possible for musicians of color.

Ramsey Lewis has been playing the piano since he was 4 years old. He knew at a young age that he wanted to play classical piano. But a music teacher told him when he was still a boy to give up that dream because the world of classical music was not open to musicians with skin the color of Ramsey's.

Fortunately for all of us, Ramsey Lewis had the good sense to know that was nonsense. He has played and recorded countless forms of music—and helped to invent new forms. In doing so, he has helped to create a world where every child is freer to pursue his or her own dreams.

Mr. Lewis' August 8 performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at Ravinia is a continuation of what the Chicago Tribune has called a "Ramsey Renaissance" as a composer. His collaborator in this new chapter of his career is Ravinia president and CEO Welz Kauffman, who commissioned Mr. Lewis to write a piano concerto for his CSO debut. In recent years, Mr. Kauffman has commissioned Mr. Lewis to write other pieces, including a jazz ballet for the Joffrey Ballet Company, and "Proclamation of Hope," a celebration of Abraham Lincoln on the bicentennial of his birth. Both works made their world premieres at Ravinia.

In 2002 Ramsey Lewis was chosen to carry the Olympic torch as it passed through Chicago on its run to Salt Lake City. With his debut with the CSO at Ravinia, Ramsey Lewis will light up the night sky again with his own special brilliance. What a joyous celebration it will be.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the PATENT Act with a strong bipartisan vote. As the Senate continues to consider this important, balanced legislation aimed at curbing abusive patent litigation practices, it is critical that the court of appeals that considers patent claims be at full strength. Legislation alone cannot solve the problems facing Main Street businesses from abuses of the patent system; we also need dedicated judges, such as Kara Farnandez Stoll, on the bench to faithfully apply the law.

Ms. Farnandez Stoll was first nominated to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal circuit more than 7 months ago. Her hearing was held more than 3 months ago and 2 months ago she was unanimously reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously rated her "well qualified" to serve on the Federal circuit—its highest possible rating. The Hispanic National Bar Association, the Federal Circuit Bar Association, and the American Intellectual Property Law Association strongly support her confirmation. Once confirmed, Ms. Farnandez Stoll will be the first woman of color

to serve on the Federal circuit. Yet her nomination has been languishing on the Senate Executive Calendar.

Nearly 6 months into this new Congress, the Republican leadership has scheduled votes to confirm only 4 district court judges. We have not confirmed a single judge this work period. Not one. This is simply unacceptable. In addition to Ms. Farnandez Stoll, there are 11 other consensus judicial nominations pending on the Senate Executive Calendar.

The other nominees pending on the calendar include five U.S. Court of Federal Claims, CFC, nominees. We are well past the 1 year anniversary of when each were first nominated and are closing in on the anniversary of all five having had hearings before they were first reported unanimously out of committee. The five CFC nominees were again reported out of committee unanimously at the beginning of this year. We have heard no opposition to any of these nominees, yet they have been in limbo for months and months because the Republican leader has refused to schedule a vote. The U.S. Court of Federal Claims is where our citizens go to seek redress against the Federal Government for monetary claims. The cases this court hears include claims of unlawful takings of private land by the U.S. Government without proper compensation under the fifth Amendment, claims of veterans seeking disability benefits for combat-related injuries, and vaccine compensation claims.

We are debating trade policy in the Senate, yet the nomination to fill one of four current vacancies on the U.S. Court of International Trade—CIT—has sat idle on the Senate Executive Calendar for months. Like the CFC nominees, the CIT nominee had a hearing last year, was favorably reported out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously by voice vote last Congress, and again earlier this year.

Also pending on the calendar are nominees to fill vacancies on the Western District of Missouri, the Western District of New York, and three nominees to fill judicial emergency vacancies—two on the Eastern District of New York and one on the Eastern District of California, all but one of whom were first nominated last year.

There is nothing keeping the Senate from confirming all 12 nominees—nothing, except for the mindset of delay for delay's sake, which is unfortunately the hallmark of the majority's leadership on judicial nominations.

The Senate has a duty to consider judicial vacancies no matter which party holds the majority. In the 17 months I chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee during President Bush's first 2 years in office, the Senate confirmed 100 Federal circuit and district court judges. I also served as chairman during the last 2 years of the Bush administration and we confirmed another 68 district and circuit court judges.

In contrast to the 4 district judges we have confirmed this year, when the

Democrats were in an equivalent position in the 7th year of the Bush administration, we had confirmed 18 judges—including 15 district and 3 circuit court judges—by June 24, 2007.

That's 18 judges under a Democratic majority compared to 4 under the Republican majority. That is nearly five times as many judges confirmed under a Democratic majority with a President of the opposite party than today's Senate Republican majority.

Nevertheless, the Republican majority continues to make excuses for their continued obstruction and delay on confirming President Obama's judicial nominees. Their excuse is that the Democratic majority was able to confirm those 18 judges by this date in 2007 only because those nominees were held over from the previous year. What the Republicans fail to note is that 6 of the 18 judges confirmed by June 24, 2007 first had their hearing in 2007, were reported out of committee without needless delay, and were confirmed promptly.

We began this Congress with 38 district and circuit court vacancies, including 12 vacancies deemed "judicial emergencies" by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. While 38 is the lowest number of vacancies during the entire Obama administration, it is still higher than the low of 28 district and circuit court vacancies during the Bush administration, which was achieved due to Democratic cooperation.

There are now 55 district and circuit court vacancies, including 27 that have been deemed "judicial emergency" vacancies. Of the 55 vacancies, 41 are in States with at least one Republican home State Senator. Of great concern to the timely administration of justice are four circuit court vacancies that are "judicial emergencies"—two in Texas, one in Alabama, and one in Kentucky—that have each been vacant and without nominees for well over a year, including one Texas circuit court vacancy that has been vacant for nearly 3 years. These 3 States alone also account for 12 district court vacancies without a currently pending nominee, half of which are "judicial emergency" vacancies.

While I know that the senior Senator from Texas, who is also the assistant republican leader, likes to say that it is the President who "has to nominate the judges," we are all well aware of the central role home State Senators have in making recommendations to the President to fill vacancies in our States. I urge all Senators to work meaningfully with President Obama to get these vacancies filled.

As we head into July 4 recess, the Senate Republican leadership should be allowing us to clear the calendar of the 12 noncontroversial consensus judicial nominees to let them get to work for the American people.

I would remind the current majority leader of his floor remarks from June