

told me he spent the last several weeks traveling across Central Illinois, visiting Muslim mosques and assuring them that they were still part of America and that they had the full protection of the law. Nevertheless, there has been a dramatic increase of anti-Muslim bigotry since 9/11. In fear and anger, some Americans have wrongly struck out at Muslims.

I had my differences with former President George W. Bush, but he showed real insight, wisdom, and leadership after 9/11 when he made it clear to America that our war was with terrorists who perverted the teachings of the Islamic religion, not with Muslims who were faithful to what he called “a faith based upon love, not hate.” Congress at that time spoke with a clear voice too. I cosponsored a resolution with John Sununu, a Republican from New Hampshire, who was then the only Arab American in the Senate. Our resolution condemned anti-Muslim, anti-Arab bigotry, and said that American Muslims are vibrant, peaceful, law-abiding, and greatly contribute to American society. That resolution passed both Chambers unanimously. I hope it would pass today.

Earlier this decade, we saw another wave of anti-Muslim rhetoric and discrimination. In 2011 I chaired the first ever congressional hearing on the civil rights of American Muslims. That hearing documented an alarming increase of anti-Muslim bigotry. At the time, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that Muslims accounted for approximately 25 percent of religious discrimination cases, although they were less than 1 percent of the population. Mary Jo O'Neill of the EEOC said:

There's a level of hatred and animosity that is shocking. I've been doing this for 31 years, and I've never seen such antipathy towards Muslim workers.

Unfortunately, we are again experiencing an increase in anti-Muslim discrimination. Last week Oren Segal of the Anti-Defamation League said, “We're definitely seeing anti-Muslim bigotry escalating around the country.”

In recent weeks vandals defaced a mosque near Austin, TX; a pig's head was thrown on the doorstep of a Philadelphia mosque; a man was arrested for breaking into a Florida mosque and damaging property; a sixth grade girl in New York City was allegedly called “ISIS” as a group of boys punched her and tried to remove her hijab; and on Thanksgiving day a Muslim cabdriver from Pittsburgh was shot in the back by a passenger who reportedly asked the driver about ISIS and whether he was a “Pakistani guy.”

Just this weekend a man in California was arrested and charged for a hate crime and arson after allegedly setting a fire in a mosque.

Last week Representative ANDRÉ CARSON—a Democrat from Indiana and one of the two American Muslims who serve in the U.S. Congress—received a

death threat. Here is what Congressman CARSON said:

You have other politicians who are joining the bandwagon and who are fanning the flames of bigotry. That concerns me because we're putting people into the line of fire exposing them to death threats, discrimination at the workplace and assaults.

These incidents of intimidation, hostility, and violence impact the entire Muslim American community. They also play into our enemies' warped views of the United States. Director Comey of the FBI noted last week that “the notion that the U.S. is anti-Muslim is part of ISIL's narrative and Al Qaeda's narrative.”

It is important to note that not only Muslim Americans are being targeted. Bigots have also targeted Arab Americans, many of whom are Christian, and Hindus, and Sikhs. After 9/11, the first victim killed in the backlash was Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American, in Mesa, AZ. I submitted a resolution, which passed the Senate unanimously, condemning bigotry against Sikh Americans.

In 2012, a White supremacist murdered six Sikhs at a gurdwara in Oak Creek, WI. Following this terrorist attack, I chaired a hearing on hate crimes and the threat of domestic extremism where we learned that the FBI wasn't even tracking these crimes against Arab Americans, Hindu Americans, and Sikh Americans. I asked the FBI to change the policy, and they did. Clearly there is more work to be done.

Last week, a vandal spray-painted anti-Muslim graffiti on a Sikh gurdwara in Buena Park, CA. In September, a Sikh man in my home State of Illinois suffered a fractured cheekbone after he was allegedly assaulted by a man who yelled “terrorist” and “go back to your country” at him.

As we work to combat terrorism, we must also work to prevent and punish discrimination and hate-fueled violence against Muslim Americans. The rights of Muslim Americans are just as important as the rights of Christians, Jews, followers of other faiths, and nonbelievers as well.

We know the First Amendment protects both the free exercise of religion and the freedom of speech. But all of us, especially those of us in public life, have a responsibility to choose our words carefully. We must condemn bias and bigotry aimed at Muslim Americans and make it clear that we will not tolerate religious discrimination in the United States of America. We can protect our Nation and still be true to the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold that suggestion?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes.

NOMINATION RETURNED TO THE EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The papers with respect to Presidential Nomi-

nation No. 742 having been returned from the White House, the nomination will be returned to the Calendar, pursuant to the order of November 30, 2015.

Mr. DURBIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The bill clerk read the nominations of Alissa M. Starzak, of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army; John Conger, of Maryland, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense; Stephen P. Welby, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; and Franklin R. Parker, of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes for debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Madam President, will the Presiding Officer inform me when I have used 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be notified when his time has expired.

STARZAK NOMINATION

Mr. REED. Mr. President, these are all able and capable individuals who have been nominated and approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee. I want to pay particular attention to the nomination of Alissa Starzak to be general counsel of the Department of the Army. I have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Starzak for several years in her current capacity as the deputy general counsel of the Department of Defense. She has done an extraordinary job. I am confident that her extensive legal experience in her current—as well as previous—position has prepared her well for the position for which she has been nominated.

Prior to her current position at the Department of Defense, Ms. Starzak worked at the CIA's Office of General Counsel and also served as counsel on the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. I don't need to

tell my colleagues in the Senate how much we rely on capable and motivated staff to fulfill our responsibilities on behalf of the American people.

I understand from Senator FEINSTEIN, under whose chairmanship Ms. Starzak served, that her work in support of the committee was nothing short of exemplary. She was an extraordinary asset to the committee in all of its deliberations.

Ms. Starzak was originally nominated to be general counsel of the Army in July 2014, and she was later approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee by a voice vote in December 2014. Unfortunately, Ms. Starzak was not confirmed by the full Senate prior to the adjournment of the last session of the Congress. She was renominated in January of this year and her nomination was unanimously agreed to by a voice vote of the committee earlier this month.

The Army has now been without a Senate-confirmed general counsel for nearly 2 years, thereby contributing to institutional instability and uncertainty. It is time to provide the Army with the leadership it deserves. If confirmed today, Ms. Starzak will join a new Secretary of the Army and also a new Army Chief of Staff, GEN Mark Milley, where together they will begin to address the challenges—all of them critical—that face the Army and all of our services.

I have no doubt that Ms. Starzak is up to the task and will execute her duties with the best interest of the men and women in uniform in the U.S. Army and their families. These thoughts will always be in the forefront of her mind, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

I wish also to point out that there were several issues raised with respect to Ms. Starzak's performance as a member of the staff of the Intelligence Committee. All of them have been found to be inaccurate. One suggestion is that there was a document known as the Panetta review, and that the committee staff gained inappropriate access to this document.

Senator FEINSTEIN pointed out—at the time she was the chairman of the Intelligence Committee—during a March 2014 floor speech that this Panetta review and all of these documents were accessed by staff through the regular use of a search tool provided by the CIA on a computer network provided by the CIA to search documents provided by the CIA. This was a process that was overseen and monitored by the CIA, obviously.

This specific suggestion, allegation, or whatever you want to call it, has been reviewed by the CIA's Inspector General, the Senate's Sergeant at Arms, the CIA's Accountability Review Board, and they found no wrongdoing on the part of members on the Intelligence Committee staff.

There was another suggestion that some of these documents were marked deliberative and/or privileged. Accord-

ing to Senator FEINSTEIN, this was not especially noteworthy to SSCI—Intelligence Committee staff—because they were providing, at the direction of their Senators, a review of CIA activities, and thousands of these documents were marked deliberative, procedural, privileged, et cetera. The responsibility of the Congress is to oversee the CIA—not what they will let us look at but what we must look at.

Additionally, Senate legal counsel confirmed to Senator FEINSTEIN that Congress does not recognize these claims of privilege when it comes to documents provided to Congress for its oversight duties, and this review process was completely within the purview of the Senate's oversight responsibility.

And then there was another suggestion, or allegation, that, in fact, Ms. Starzak was involved in the relocation of these Panetta review documents from an offsite CIA facility to the offices of the Senate Intelligence Committee here in the Hart Building. These are absolutely and totally without merit because it turns out that the date of the removal of the documents from the offsite facility occurred late in 2013, more than 2 years after Ms. Starzak left the staff of the Intelligence Committee.

I think it is important to get these facts and conclusions by authoritative sources, such as the Sergeant at Arms, the CIA Inspector General, and the Accountability Review Board of the CIA because there have been some suggestions that she was, in fact, culpable, and that is not the case at all.

I again urge all of my colleagues to support a very capable individual who has the skill, the dedication, and the ability to be an extraordinary general counsel for Department of the Army.

With that, I retain the remainder of my time and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time be divided equally.

We have already divided the time equally.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REED. How much time do we have remaining on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Eight and a half minutes.

Mr. REED. I believe Senator FEINSTEIN is coming to the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the time be equally charged to both sides.

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

Mr. REED. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I am very pleased to rise in strong support of the confirmation of Alissa Starzak to be the general counsel of the Army. I urge my colleagues to support her nomination in the vote we are about to take.

Alissa was nominated for the position in July of 2014. While she was reported out favorably by the distinguished Armed Services Committee last year, she did not receive consideration by the full Senate prior to the end of the 113th Congress. The President nominated her again in January of this year, and I am very pleased that the Armed Services Committee, under the chairmanship of JOHN MCCAIN and the ranking member, JACK REED, approved her nomination just a week ago, and I thank both of them for doing so.

I support Alissa Starzak for the only reason that matters: She will be an excellent general counsel for the Department of the Army. First, she is a strong lawyer. Second, she cares deeply about the men and women of the U.S. Army. Given the many challenges our military faces, we can't afford to have this position remain vacant when there is a very strong candidate before us.

Since mid-2011, Alissa Starzak has been a senior attorney within the Office of General Counsel of the Department of Defense. She currently serves as a deputy general counsel. She has led the Department's interactions with Congress on preparing and negotiating the annual Defense authorization, and she has had senior roles in policy discussions about detainee affairs, sexual assault, and harassment in the military.

Alissa has strong expertise in the legal challenges that confront the U.S. Army, and she is well suited to provide legal guidance to the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Army and ensure the Department strictly obeys the law.

More importantly for me, Alissa was a counsel on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence from early 2007 to 2011, first under Chairman Jay Rockefeller and then continuing under my chairmanship. In that role, she worked diligently on legislation to update the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, culminating in the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, and she drafted our Intelligence authorization bills, among other issues.

From December 2007 until her departure from the committee in 2011, Alissa was one of two staff leads for our review of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program. She coauthored a

summary of interrogations of two early CIA detainees, Abu Zubaydah and al-Nashiri, that spurred the committee to approve, by a 14-to-1 vote, a full review of the entire program.

As the colead of that study, Ms. Starzak reviewed many thousands of documents, drafted portions of the committee's study, and advised me and other members of the committee on the progress of the investigation. She departed the committee in 2011—that was 4 years ago—before the completion of the report, its declassification, and its public release.

I know her work on the SSCI study came up during her confirmation hearing at the Armed Services Committee, and I want the record to be perfectly clear. Alissa Starzak departed the committee staff in May of 2011, well before the controversy of the CIA gaining unauthorized access to the committee staff computer network and well before the controversy over the so-called Panetta Review documents. So it is not fair to blame her for anything that happened during that time. She was not there and has not been there for 4 years.

As I stated in a Senate floor statement on March 11, 2014, a portion of the CIA's Panetta Review was transported securely, consistent with its classification from a CIA off-site location to another secure facility—the committee's safe in the Senate. This relocation occurred in late 2013, more than 2 years after Ms. Starzak left the committee staff and long after she began her work at the Pentagon. She had no prior knowledge and no role in the transportation of the document to the Senate. So there should be no confusion on that point.

Before coming to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Alissa Starzak worked as an attorney at the CIA's Office of General Counsel and as an associate in the international law firm of O'Melveny & Myers.

She clerked for the Honorable E. Grady Jolly on the Fifth Circuit of Appeals after graduating from the University of Chicago Law School with honors. Ms. Starzak did her undergraduate work at Amherst College where she graduated magna cum laude. So Alissa Starzak has the intelligence, the right background, and the strong experience within the Department of Defense to be general counsel for the Army.

I urge my colleagues to confirm Alissa Starzak. It is unfortunate that it has taken a year and a half since she was first nominated, but I am very pleased we are voting to confirm her today.

I conclude by thanking Senator McCain and Senator Reed for working together to get this done.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, since no one else seeks the floor at this time, it has just been brought to my attention that there are a couple of letters here which I thought are on point, and it will become clear.

This letter is from Alberto Mora:

I want to state my absolute and explicit endorsement for the nomination of Alissa Starzak to be the next General Counsel of the Army.

By my current affiliation with the Harvard Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, I served as the General Counsel of the Navy from 2001–2006. I have served alongside many of the most senior civilians in the Department of Defense, and I know what qualities successful civilian leaders should bring to their work, among them professional competence and a commitment to honorable public service. These two qualities describe Ms. Starzak.

The Senate has honored me four times by confirming me for appointments in both Republican and Democratic administrations. I am familiar with and supportive of the Senate's role in confirming senior federal officials, but I fear that in Ms. Starzak's case her confirmation has been impeded for reasons unworthy of the Senate. As you are no doubt aware, she served as counsel on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for more than four years. Her work on that committee was thorough and professional; she has served the Congress and our republicably. That she has been disparaged for her work is wrong. It sends a clear and troubling signal to every congressional staffer of both parties that his or her dedicated public service may be treated not as a credential, but as a disqualification for senior administration appointments. If that signal is confirmed by failing to confirm Ms. Starzak—not for what she did wrong, but for what she did right—it would only serve to damage the Senate, this and future administrations, and our nation.

It is signed by Alberto Mora.

I would also like to submit a letter from RADM John D. Hutson, U.S. Navy, head of the JAG Corps, retired.

I write to express my complete and unequivocal support for the nomination of Alissa Starzak to be the next General Counsel of the Army. I have deep concerns that her nomination has been the subject of unfortunate and nasty political theater, but I am heartened to know that her nomination will receive a full floor vote on Monday, 14 December 2015. As you are no doubt aware, she served as a professional staff member on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for more than four years. . . .

I served as The Judge Advocate General of the Navy. I underwent the confirmation process. As the senior uniformed lawyer in our service, I spent significant time assisting nominees with confirmation. Throughout my career I worked alongside, and under, some of the most capable, professional, and brilliant people who make up the civilian ranks of appointed leaders in our government. While I don't know her personally, I am very familiar with her reputation, which is stellar.

I write because I believe her case has been one that has damaged our republic. She has been maligned for performing her duties as a public servant, and her nomination was held up because of events that occurred after she left the committee staff.

I encourage you in the strongest terms to confirm her for this position. Losing her services to the ranking of partisan disputes would be to the detriment of both the Department of Defense and the country.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. HUTSON,
Rear Admiral, USN.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that both of these letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MCLEAN, VA.
December 11, 2015.

DEAR SENATOR: I write to state my absolute and explicit endorsement for the nomination of Alissa Starzak to be the next General Counsel of the Army.

Before my current affiliation with the Harvard Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, I served as the General Counsel of the Navy from 2001–2006. I have served alongside many of the most senior civilians in the Department of Defense, and I know what qualities successful civilian leaders should bring to their work, among them professional competence and a commitment to honorable public service. These two qualities describe Ms. Starzak.

The Senate has honored me four times by confirming me for appointments in both Republican and Democratic administrations. I am familiar with and supportive of the Senate's role in confirming senior federal officials, but I fear that in Ms. Starzak's case her confirmation has been impeded for reasons unworthy of the Senate. As you are no doubt aware, she served as counsel on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for more than four years. Her work on that committee was thorough and professional; she has served the Congress and our republicably. That she has been disparaged for her work is wrong. It sends a clear and troubling signal to every congressional staffer of both parties that his or her dedicated public service may be treated not as a credential, but as a disqualification for senior administration appointments. If that signal is confirmed by failing to confirm Ms. Starzak—not for what she did wrong, but for what she did right—it would only serve to damage the Senate, this and future administrations, and our nation.

I encourage you to confirm Ms. Starzak without further delay.

Sincerely,

ALBERTO MORA.

DECEMBER 11, 2015.

DEAR SENATOR: I write to express my complete and unequivocal support for the nomination of Alissa Starzak to be the next General Counsel of the Army. I have deep concerns that her nomination has been the subject of unfortunate and nasty political theater, but I am heartened to know that her nomination will receive a full floor vote on Monday, 14 December 2015. As you are no doubt aware, she served as a professional staff member on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence for more than four years. Unfortunately, she has been unfairly and inappropriately used as "leverage" in a partisan quarrel.

I served as The Judge Advocate General of the Navy. I underwent the confirmation process. As the senior uniformed lawyer in our service, I spent significant time assisting nominees with confirmation. Throughout my career I worked alongside, and under, some of the most capable, professional, and brilliant people who make up the civilian ranks of appointed leaders in our government. While I don't know her personally, I am very familiar with her reputation, which is stellar.

I write because I believe her case has been one that has damaged our republic. She has been maligned for performing her duties as a public servant, and her nomination was held up because of events that occurred after she left the committee staff.

I encourage you in the strongest terms to confirm her for this position. Losing her services to the ranking of partisan disputes would be to the detriment of both the Department of Defense and the country.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. HUTSON,

Rear Admiral, USN, JACG, (Ret.).

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COTTON. I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Starzak nomination?

Mr. COTTON. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) would have voted "nay."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW), and the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 45, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 335 Ex.]

YEAS—45

Baldwin	Franken	Mikulski
Bennet	Gillibrand	Murphy
Blumenthal	Hatch	Murray
Booker	Heinrich	Nelson
Brown	Heitkamp	Reed
Cantwell	Hirono	Reid
Cardin	Isakson	Schatz
Carper	Kaine	Schumer
Casey	King	Shaheen
Collins	Klobuchar	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Manchin	Udall
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCaskey	Warren
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse

NAYS—34

Alexander	Daines	Perdue
Ayotte	Enzi	Portman
Barrasso	Ernst	Roberts
Blunt	Fischer	Rounds
Boozman	Gardner	Sasse
Burr	Grassley	Sessions
Capito	Hoeven	Shelby
Cassidy	Inhofe	Tillis
Cochran	Lankford	Toomey
Cornyn	Lee	Wicker
Cotton	McConnell	
Crapo	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—21

Boxer	Kirk	Rubio
Coats	McCain	Sanders
Cruz	Merkley	Scott
Flake	Moran	Stabenow
Graham	Paul	Sullivan
Heller	Peters	Vitter
Johnson	Risch	Wyden

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, unfortunately, due to inclement weather that delayed my flight to Washington, DC, I was unable to attend today's roll-call vote on the nomination of Alissa M. Starzak to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army. Had I been able to attend, I would have supported her nomination. •

VOTE ON CONGER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Conger nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON WELBY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Welby nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON PARKER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Parker nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

Mr. CRAPO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in 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 KENTUCKY ADJUTANT GENERAL EDWARD W. TONINI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute today to a distinguished airman and honored Kentuckian who has given over four decades of his life to military service. Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, for 8 years the adjutant general of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, retired from service on December 8.

General Tonini is a career Air National Guard officer and was appointed adjutant general by the former Governor in 2007. As adjutant general, he served as the commanding general of both the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard and as executive director of the Department of Military Affairs.

In his 8 years of service in that role, he successfully led the National Guard and Kentucky through many difficult challenges with great skill and ability. He leaves Kentucky's National Guard stronger and more effective than when he found it.

During his tenure, Kentucky's National Guard continued to deploy soldiers and airmen to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, South America, and even Antarctica. In fact, Kentucky National Guard soldiers and airmen were deployed in support of contingency operations every day of General Tonini's tenure, to the tune of over 16,000 servicemembers over the years.

In January 2009, Kentucky experienced one of the worst natural disasters in the State's history when 10 inches of snow fell on top of 3 inches of ice throughout most of the State. More than 100 counties declared states of emergency while FEMA declared the whole State a disaster zone.

In response to this crisis, General Tonini led the largest State-active-duty call up in Kentucky's history. More than 4,600 servicemembers assisted Kentuckians in need, as nearly 800,000 people were without power and heat. Surely many lives were saved thanks to his leadership during these efforts.

General Tonini worked to establish Kentucky's new, state-of-the-art Commonwealth Emergency Operations Center, which serves as a vital command center and liaison to local governments in times of crisis. The new Commonwealth Emergency Operations Center