

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

isn't the only new improvement under General Tonini's watch.

During the last 8 years, the Kentucky National Guard has undertaken nearly \$200 million in facility improvements, consisting of both new buildings and additions and alterations to existing buildings, to add about 650,000 square feet of facilities to the Guard's resources. These new facilities include the Paducah and Richmond Armed Forces Reserve Center, the Owensboro Readiness Center, and the Army Aviation Support Facility in Frankfort, among others. General Tonini was also a champion of the important work taking place at the Bluegrass Station industrial park in central Kentucky.

General Tonini was a strong advocate of Kentucky's Agribusiness Development Teams, a program in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. These teams of Kentucky soldiers and airmen taught agricultural expertise to the people of Afghanistan, sharing their knowledge of irrigation techniques, food preservation, veterinary medicine, and more with hundreds of Afghans across the country.

General Tonini also was a strong supporter of the Guard's state partnership program, where the Kentucky National Guard partners with a foreign nation to strengthen the operations of both partners. The Kentucky National Guard has partnered with Ecuador for 19 years. Under the general's leadership, Kentucky added a second partnership program with Djibouti, making my State the first to partner with an east African nation. Djibouti is a key strategic partner for us in humanitarian and counterterrorist operations.

General Tonini's leadership has also been recognized outside the Commonwealth. In 2013, he was elected the president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States. During his tenure as president, America's National Guard boasted more than 450,000 personnel across the Nation.

Under General Tonini, Kentucky hosted the two largest events in the Nation for survivor outreach to support the family members of fallen servicemembers, one in Louisville and the other in northern Kentucky. We were able to honor more than 850 survivors from multiple States.

Finally, the Kentucky National Guard Memorial saw completion after 10 years thanks to General Tonini's persistence and his prodigious fundraising efforts. Located at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort, the memorial honors 234 Kentucky guardsmen who have given their lives in the line of duty since 1912.

General Tonini has all these accomplishments and many more to be proud of as he steps down from the adjutant general post he so ably filled for 8 years. He has truly earned a place not just in Kentucky history, but in Kentuckians' hearts for his honorable service.

I would be remiss if I did not also laud the general's wife, Carol, who has

been a consistent presence with him at the full range of National Guard events, both in Kentucky and throughout the country. She has been a tremendous asset to him thanks to her grace, her support for those in uniform and their families, and her rock-solid support for her husband.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating General Edward W. Tonini upon his retirement and thanking him for his service—not just over the last 8 years, but over the last four decades. Kentucky is thankful for the many sacrifices he has made over the years to protect our communities and our Nation. I certainly want to wish General Tonini all the best in whatever awaits him in his next endeavors, and I am sure he will tackle all future challenges with the same vigor and fortitude he applied to his military service. Thank you, General Tonini, on behalf of a grateful Commonwealth.

RECOGNIZING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CULINARY WORKERS UNION LOCAL 226

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 80th anniversary of the Culinary Workers Union Local 226.

Since it was founded in 1935, the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 has successfully advocated on behalf of thousands of hospitality workers throughout Nevada. These workers include the housekeepers, kitchen staff, cooks, and food and beverage servers who play an indispensable role in our local and national economy. Along with local partners, the culinary union has effectively represented workers by advocating for competitive wages, affordable health insurance coverage, and enhanced working conditions. The culinary union is vital in the effort to provide real opportunities for working-class individuals and families.

Over the past eight decades, workplace environments across the United States have been transformed to meet our country's changing needs. Throughout these changes, the culinary union has always been on the frontlines to ensure that workers continue to receive fair treatment and the benefits they have earned. In particular, the culinary union successfully mobilized casino workers on many occasions to ensure that they received adequate health care coverage, improved contract terms, and pension benefits.

The organization has also had a positive impact on its members through the establishment of local services, such as the culinary health fund and the culinary pharmacy. The culinary health fund is a health plan that provides benefits to more than 130,000 participants, ensuring that union members and their families have access to essential health care services that keep them healthy. Additionally, in 2001, the culinary union launched a citizen project, which provides assistance for

individuals and families navigating the citizenship process.

I applaud the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 for their dedicated work and commitment to improving the lives of Nevadans. Their work is truly appreciated and admired, and I wish the organization continued success for years to come.

TRIBUTE TO LOURDES TIBAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want other Senators to be aware of information I received about Ecuadorian National Assembly member Lourdes Tiban, a prominent and respected leader of Ecuador's indigenous people.

As an indigenous leader, Ms. Tiban has become one of the most outspoken advocates for freedom of expression, indigenous rights, and social rights in Ecuador. Not surprisingly, this has made her the target of verbal attacks by President Rafael Correa.

Earlier this year, Ms. Tiban was beaten by unidentified assailants as she was walking to work. The assault was filmed and then shared online by government supporters who posted humiliating comments.

This isn't the first time that Ms. Tiban has been physically assaulted. She is the victim of two other similar incidents which I am told have not been properly investigated.

It is regrettable that, instead of vigorously investigating this latest attack against Ms. Tiban, a National Assembly member from President Correa's political party has brought a criminal case for libel against her. This is believed to be in retaliation for Ms. Tiban's claim that government supporters were responsible for targeting her, presumably in an attempt to silence her and remove her from the National Assembly.

Ecuador is a country where judicial independence is seriously compromised. I have spoken about this several times, and it has been well documented by the Department of State, the United Nations, and human rights organizations. It is also illustrated by the fact that the Council of the Judiciary, with the power to appoint and remove judges, is comprised of five former officials of the Correa administration. It is likely that the criminal investigation against Ms. Tiban could result in an unjust conviction.

We should condemn these attacks on freedom of expression, political rights, and the rights of indigenous people, and we should defend judicial independence which is fundamental to democracy in Ecuador and throughout the hemisphere.

Lourdes Tiban has devoted her legislative efforts to protecting human rights for her people, and I am confident that she will continue to do so as she is not easily intimidated. She has my support and the support of others who believe in the principles of democracy.