

lead us down the path to ruin. I see no honor in this, no judgment, no courage.

In these cases, we must have absolutely no tolerance—no tolerance for incompetence, no tolerance for those without integrity, and no tolerance for self-interest that overrides the greater good. And, just to be clear, this is purely and simply an issue of leadership. Some may not see it. And some may be misled, burdened with the inability to differentiate between true leadership and those impersonating leaders. But those that are tired of political correctness, the endless pursuit of consensus, unprofessional behavior, and paralyzing bureaucracy, they understand.

And those that expect vision, those that expect strategy, those that expect executable plans, those that expect fairness, honor, judgment, courage, determination from our leaders, they understand. And we should certainly not tolerate the behaviors of the few with cavalier disregard of the facts, the few that masquerade as leaders, and those that can't recognize it or lack the will to deal with it as they should, those that are threatened by honesty and candor that send the signal that this is ok and that even reward it. Tolerance here is insidious and dangerous. It doesn't take many examples to poison a culture and affect generations. We cannot afford to let this happen. We cannot afford anything less than greatness. This is why I am speaking this way.

We must have the courage to recognize good performance, regardless of whether it is politically correct, and deal appropriately with bad performance. We must have the courage to speak truth to those below us, around us, and above us. Ambiguity, half-truths, misleading messages, and lies demonstrate poor judgment and lack of courage. Tolerance of this, at best, creates inefficiency and weakness, and at its worst, danger. We all should have the judgment and courage to recognize this, call it for what it is, and dedicate ourselves to eliminating it.

In this moment we require leaders. We require leaders that are capable of seeing new patterns in complexity and conflict and applying new methods to achieve unconventional and uncommon outcomes. We need leaders at all levels that have no tolerance for status quo and mediocrity. We need leaders with competence and courage, with the ability to learn and adapt quickly. We need leaders that are comfortable making decisions and taking action in the face of significant ambiguity, unclear guidance, and near impossible timelines. We need leaders that know how to generate both unity of command and unity of effort. It remains all our duty to recognize and contribute to the greater good. We must be able to understand the interests of others and exercise the flexibility and skill in accommodating those interests while protecting our own.

And just because we can see the need for collaboration doesn't mean we can

just wish it into being. There is a science to collaboration and we must be well practiced at it. In fact, we should all be experts because we must accept the simple fact that no truly great thing is achievable without others. No great accomplishment was, or ever will be, possible without collaborative effort. In fact, the more complex a thing, the more challenges we face, the more disciplines are involved, the more integration is required, and the more collaboration is demanded. It is time for collaboration based on respect—respect for well-argued positions, respect for expertise, respect for remarkable performance. It is time for collaboration rooted in both art and science. It is time to put in place principles that bind us by covenants and not just contracts or legal documents. It is time to evolve from practitioners to experts and evangelists.

There is clearly science in this, but science is not enough. We need the 'artist.' We need the artist to apply the principals of this science. Like any great piece of art, it is not simply a collection of canvas and paint applied in the correct order. There is an ingredient that only the artist can provide, an ingredient that differentiates a common work from one that is uncommon. And what makes relationships so difficult is that more than one person is painting on the canvas at the same time and, still, the result must look as though only one artist held the brush. We need the artists; we need the leaders that know this and have the skill to execute it.

It is time, it is always the time, to carefully and ruthlessly choose these leaders—leaders that understand what I have just said; leaders that demonstrate extraordinary courage, honor, determination, and judgment; leaders that understand how to nurture and protect innovation; leaders that understand and can enable collaboration. For it will be only those leaders that will take us to new heights of performance and to deeper connections between all parties necessary to solve the most complex problems of our time. It will be only those leaders that will move us aggressively forward in the right direction, intolerant of misbehavior and relentless in the pursuit of excellence.

For us, we see this as our duty. We are determined to the produce results that are required by our military and our country—to fight and win on any battlefield, of any kind, at any time. The future is ours to shape. And make no mistake, the high court of history will hold each of us accountable with the lives of those we send to stand on future battlefields. I ask you to consider what I have just said.

In this job I have had the honor to see the work of patriots, those that generate readiness for those that apply it, to support and serve beside those that stand in harm's way, and to place coins in the hands of thousands that embody the words honor, judgment,

courage, and determination. And what is left for me to do now is simply say thank you. Thank you to those that secure our freedom, no matter their position. Thank you to those for which I have great admiration and to which I will always be in debt."

John's speech is a lesson to us all. I personally will strive to answer the call and live up to the virtues he praises: honor, judgment, courage, and determination. As I stated in a video message to this year's symposium attendees, I count myself fortunate and blessed to call John a friend and wish him continued success in his future endeavors.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO JORDAN SMITH

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to give tribute to a Kentuckian who has become a local icon and a national celebrity. Jordan Smith from Harlan, KY, has risen to fame over the past few months for his astounding performances throughout this season of the television show *The Voice*. He sang his way into the hearts of Americans, and following his rendition of Queen's "Somebody to Love" on December 16, the show's viewers voted him to a first place win.

I know I speak for my fellow Kentuckians when I say we are so proud to have someone like Jordan representing our State. This proud Kentucky Wildcat fan not only clinched a first place win in the competition, he also rose to a No. 1 spot on iTunes for record sales, beating out superstars like Adele. I think we have so many talented individuals like Jordan in Kentucky, and I am so glad that everyone else thinks so, too.

A homecoming parade in Jordan's honor is scheduled for Monday, December 21, in his hometown. Kentucky is excited to welcome him home and even more so to see what he will do with his amazing talent in the future. I would like to congratulate Jordan Smith for all his success. I am certain we will be hearing much more from him in the years to come.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article about Jordan's historic win from the Harlan Daily Enterprise be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Harlan Daily Enterprise, Dec. 15, 2015]

SMITH IS SEASON 9 VOICE WINNER

(By Reina P. Cunningham)

After months of show-stopping performances, Harlan native Jordan Smith has been announced as Season 9 winner of the hit reality television show 'The Voice,' winning \$100,000 and a recording contract with Republic Records.

Going into the show, Smith was sitting pretty at the No. 1 spots on both 'The Voice' and the Top 100 iTunes charts with his most recent single, 'Mary Did You Know.' Sitting at the No. 1 spot is nothing new for the young man who beat out national singing

sensation Adele for the No. 1 spot on the Top 100 iTunes chart—he has entered most of the results rounds in the same situation. Additionally, going into the live results finale, Smith held half of the top 10 spots on ‘The Voice’ iTunes charts and had 10 singles ranking on ‘The Voice’ chart—no easy feat considering the criteria for doing so means the single must be ranked on the Top 200 iTunes chart.

In addition to performing with former contestants from this season, Smith performed with former Voice coach and world renowned singer Usher on Tuesday night’s live results show. The duo sang Usher’s hit ‘Without You’ with the crowd screaming and cheering throughout the performance as Smith showcased his broad range.

Throughout the show, Smith has remained humble as the judges continue to remark on his flawless performances, citing his perfection and ability to connect with the audience.

The judges are not the only ones raving about Smith. Fans are posting on social media about how much the young artist has inspired them through his music. In addition to purchasing iTunes and making social media posts, fans cannot get enough of Smith’s performances. As of the finale show on Tuesday, Smith’s YouTube performances on the show had an outstanding 55 million views to date.

Smith spoke about what the experience has meant to him in an interview that aired during the live finale. The young singer, who continuously stressed how important it is to him to make it acceptable to be who you are, echoed those sentiments again during the interview, saying if he won the show it would prove it.

“You can be exactly who you are . . . to be the winner of The Voice would just prove that,” said Smith.

Later in the show, the top 4 performers were surprised with brand new vehicles—courtesy of the show’s partners, Nissan.

Smith chose the Nissan Altima and expressed his gratitude for the vehicle, saying he would not have to borrow his parents’ car anymore.

Smith was the only remaining contestant on coach Adam Levine’s team and the coach was obviously thrilled for the young man who he says has inspired him throughout the show.

Smith will be making appearances on numerous upcoming television shows as a result of the win.

A homecoming celebration is planned on Monday in Smith’s honor. A parade will begin at 2:30 p.m. in downtown Harlan followed by a program at 4 p.m. at the Harlan Center.

To continue following Smith, like his Facebook page and follow him on Twitter.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as we close the book on the first session of the 114th Congress, our attention is on the thousands of pages in the omnibus spending bill. But as the Republican leadership rushes to spin the press about what the Senate has accomplished in their 12 months in the majority, there is one Senate responsibility that should not get lost in the noise. That is our responsibility to equip our coequal branches of government, the Federal judiciary and the executive branch, with the confirmed public servants that both branches need to serve the American people.

Senate Republicans began the year by filibustering the nomination of the first Black woman to be nominated for the position of Attorney General of the United States. No other Attorney General nominee in our history has been met with a filibuster. That did not stop Republicans from holding up Loretta Lynch’s nomination longer than the last seven Attorneys Generals combined. Our Nation’s top law enforcement official deserved better treatment, but the fight to get her a confirmation vote previewed how difficult it would be to get votes scheduled on other crucial nominees. Republicans have blocked confirmation votes for the people nominated to serve as Ambassadors to some of our closest allies. They have blocked consideration of nominees who would help keep our country safe from terrorist threats, including a Treasury Department nominee who would lead an office that investigates terrorist financing.

By the end of this week, Senate Republicans will have also earned the dubious distinction of matching the record for confirming the fewest annual number of judicial nominees in more than half a century. Too many Americans who have sought justice in our Federal courts this year have instead found delays and empty courtrooms because of Senate Republicans’ obstruction on judicial nominees. I am concerned that Republicans’ treatment of our third branch risks politicizing it and diminishing the role that it was designed to play in our system of government.

For the first 6 years of President Obama’s tenure in office, Senate Republicans pulled out every stop to obstruct confirmations on judicial nominees—systematically filibustering nominees and abandoning the Senate’s tradition of confirming consensus judicial nominees before long recesses. While I was hopeful they would change course once they assumed the majority, they have instead taken their obstruction to unprecedented heights by virtually shutting down judicial confirmations.

Over the course of the entire year, Senate Republicans have allowed judicial confirmation votes for only 11 nominees. In stark contrast, when Senate Democrats were in the majority during the seventh year of the Bush Presidency, we confirmed 40 judges that year—more than triple the number of judges confirmed this year. The Senate has a constitutional duty to provide advice and consent on the President’s nominees. It is part of the core duties we must fulfill as Senators, and a fully functioning Federal judiciary is dependent on us meeting this obligation.

I have urged the Republican leaders to allow confirmation votes on the uncontroversial judicial nominees before the end of the year. We have 19 judicial nominees still pending on the floor. Each of these nominees was voice voted out of the Judiciary Committee,

and each has the support of their home State Senators. Traditionally, the Senate has confirmed such consensus nominees at the end of a session, but Republicans have repeatedly refused to do so during the Obama Presidency. This is the seventh year in a row that Senate Republicans are rejecting the Senate’s practice of consenting to confirmation votes at the end of a session. At the end of 2009, Senate Republicans left 10 judicial nominees on the Senate floor without a vote. At the end of 2010 and again in 2011, Senate Republicans left 19 judicial nominees pending on the calendar as they left town. In 2012, it was 11 judicial nominees, and in 2013, it was nine that Senate Republicans left pending on the floor. Last year, Senate Republicans attempted to block 12 nominees on the floor in December. Fortunately, because Leader REID took seriously the Senate’s duty to fill judicial vacancies and filed cloture on those nominees, we were able to get those nominees confirmed. In each of the last 2 years of the George W. Bush administration when Democrats were in the Senate majority, we confirmed all of President Bush’s judicial nominees pending on the Executive Calendar in December before we left for the year. Contrast that with this year when Senate Republicans are leaving 19 judicial nominees pending on the floor as they head home.

The Republicans’ double standard for President Obama’s nominees will force the Senate to spend time next year doing work that should have been completed by now. For example, for the 19 nominations Senate Republicans left in 2010 and again in 2011, it took nearly half the following year in each case for the Senate to confirm these nominees. Perhaps Senate Republicans’ real intent is to just run out the clock on the Obama administration—but these delays are not procedural abstractions without real world consequences. For the judicial nominees who have already made a commitment to public service in the Federal judiciary, the obstruction means they must continue to wait and keep their professional lives on hold wondering if the Senate will do its job.

The consequences for the judges currently serving in the Federal judiciary, as well as the litigants seeking justice before them, are also very real. Senate Republicans’ treatment of judicial nominations has resulted in a dramatic increase in judicial vacancies this year. Since Republicans took over the majority in January, judicial vacancies have increased by more than 50 percent—from 42 to 66. These vacancies impact communities across America, and it is doing the most harm to States with at least one Republican Senator. Of the 66 current vacancies that exist, 47 of them—or more than 70 percent—are in States with at least one Republican Senator.

Of critical concern is the fact that judicial vacancies deemed to be “emergency” vacancies by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts have