

People will tell you that Mike loves history and political history in particular. It is a shared passion that kept me challenged and often entertained. People will tell you a few other things about Mike too. He is always smiling. He is always laughing. He always has a story to tell and a recipe to share. This aspiring chef and endeavoring fly fisherman is happiest when he is with his family—his delightful wife Ann and his sons Alex and Will—and Mike is at his best when he is outdoors camping or biking or just simply enjoying life beyond these walls.

When Mike told me it was his time to retire from the Senate, I was sad to see him go, but at the same time I was glad to see him able to spend more time around the people and things that make Mike, Mike.

Ronald Michael Brumas came to my office as a colleague and leaves as a friend. I thank him for his many years of dedicated service to me and to this body, and I send him best wishes for a retirement that promises to be anything but boring.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ENERGY LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have joined with the Republican leader over the last couple of days saying good things about the bill that is on the floor. But today my friend the Republican leader stated that nothing has happened with energy in this country since 2007. That simply is not right. It is not true. We have done a lot of stuff in the Senate under President Obama to do good things about energy.

For example, the first major bill under President Obama was the so-called American Recovery Act, the stimulus bill. In that bill there was a lot of stuff to change the energy delivery system in this country to allow the creation of new power lines which were so badly needed all over America.

For those of us who represent Nevada, we have a power line that now goes from northern Nevada to southern Nevada, and it would never have happened but for that legislation we passed. And there was an announcement made 2 weeks ago that that line is now going to be taken even farther to make it easier to transport power to California—renewable energy power. I spoke to the owner of that line, who owns half of it with NV Energy, and soon they will be taking it clear to the Northwest.

Of course, in the stimulus bill, it was the first time there has been major legislation allowed for tax credits, tax incentives for doing renewable energy. And the bill we just passed, the omnibus bill, the tax extenders—there is tremendous stuff in that bill for renew-

able energy and other electricity initiatives.

So I like this bill that is on the floor. It is a good bill. But it simply is not valid to say that nothing has happened since 2007 because that is a gross understatement.

I really hope we can pass the bill that is on the floor. The vast majority of this bill contains the Shaheen-Portman legislation that we tried valiantly to get done in the past. It was blocked by Republican filibusters. Sadly, the co-sponsor of the bill twice voted against his own bill. The Senator from Ohio voted against his own legislation. I hope that doesn't happen again.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the President of the United States deserves the right to choose a team to carry out the work that is being done here, and the leader of that work to be done here is the President. It was the same way with President Bush, President Reagan, and President Clinton. They deserved a team—a team they chose—to help effectuate policies they saw as necessary for this country. The President of the United States deserves the right to choose a team to carry out his vision here at home and around the world—his vision. I am not alone in that belief. My friend, the senior Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, said: “The President, in my view, has a clear right to put into place the team he believes will serve him best.”

Sadly, since President Obama was elected, Republicans have stopped at nothing to undermine the President's team—seeking to prevent progress by denying him the personnel he wants to carry out his agenda. Despite record obstruction, President Obama has achieved remarkable progress. I talked about some of that just a minute ago. Imagine what President Obama could have accomplished if Republicans took their constitutional duties seriously.

Regrettably, during the Obama Presidency, Republicans have done everything within their power to block, obstruct, stonewall, hinder qualified public servants from serving. In the first year of Republican control, the Senate confirmed the fewest nominations of any first session in memory. This blatant strategy of obstruction is shameful and dangerous to our economy and the national security of our country.

Headlines around the world remind us each day of the turmoil that exists in the global financial market and terrorism that threatens the world. Today we learned of multiple bombings yesterday and last night in Nigeria—lots of people killed. We can only wait and see where else that turmoil will arise.

Most Americans agree that we need a full complement of appointees to address the challenges we face. Republicans are preventing our government from doing its job at home and around the world.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Senate banking

committee has reported out at least one nomination every year for the past 50 years, but not last year—last year, not a single nominee. Currently, nominees to the Federal Reserve Board, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and other important financial assignments are stalled in the banking committee. The committee has been operating under Republican leadership for the past 13 months, and they have yet to report a single nomination out of that committee. That is the definition of historic obstruction.

If there is any nominee who deserves to be confirmed immediately, it is a man by the name of Adam Szubin, whom the President nominated to combat terrorism financing—think about that—terrorism financing. He is desperately needed at the Treasury Department. Jack Lew has called me on many occasions talking about how this man needs to fill this assignment. He has expressed to me the importance of his job in trying to slow ISIS and their financial network and other terrorism activities around the country. As Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Crimes, Szubin would lead a team that disrupts terrorist financing networks, cutting off money for terrorists so they can't finance their evil deeds. He has served as a career civil servant under both Republican and Democratic Presidents.

Despite the importance of his work, Republicans are preventing a vote in the banking committee and thus preventing Adam Szubin from having a vote here on the Senate floor. He is currently acting—he is certainly acting in a role that is not permanent, which is why they call him an acting member of the Treasury Department. He lacks the stature that his counterparts have around the world. So he is not able to do all that should be done to disrupt terrorist financial networks throughout the world.

In a September hearing on his nomination, the chairman of the banking committee, the senior Senator from Alabama said: “Mr. Szubin is eminently qualified for this [position].”

Eminently qualified, not reported out of the banking committee, no vote here on the Senate floor—why are we holding up this critical nomination? We all know why. Powerful rightwing groups have announced that they are scoring votes on Presidential nominations. In fact, Heritage Action, which is a front group for the tea party and the Koch brothers, said the Senate should only confirm nominees they deem worthwhile—they deem, not Senators but this rightwing cabal. This comes at the expense of the American people and our national security.

If the Republican leadership follows this weird plan, scores of Ambassadors charged with representing our interests around the world could be prevented from service. They have been prevented from service.

We have several credible nominees currently awaiting floor votes. Ms.

Azita Raji, who has been nominated to represent America in Sweden, is an accomplished businesswoman who has lived and worked in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. There has been more than 300 Swedish citizens who have left Sweden to fight with ISIS in either Syria or Iraq, making this nation the second largest country of origin per capita for foreign fighters coming from Europe to the Middle East. We need to get this done. It is not right for America to not be able to deal, on a daily basis, with the authority to help Sweden with their issues. The Swedish Government is on heightened alert for an attack. Yet we don't have a Senate-confirmed ambassador to represent us in Stockholm. She was first nominated to be Ambassador in October 2014. We are now in 2016. We don't have an ambassador to Sweden.

We don't have an ambassador to Norway, and it has been that way for more than 2 years. President Obama nominated a person by the name of Samuel Heins, an accomplished lawyer and humanitarian from Minnesota. His nomination is not controversial. It is only controversial, I guess, to the Koch brothers, the tea party, and Heritage Action. He should be confirmed without delay, but it has been 2 years.

Other State Department nominations have been blocked for partisan reasons by the junior Senator from Texas. Tom Shannon has been nominated to be Under Secretary of State. We don't have an ambassador to Mexico. Tom Shannon has been nominated to the fourth highest ranking position in the State Department. He would like to be serving. He would serve as the day-to-day manager of overall regional and bilateral policy issues and oversee State Department bureaus around the world. He is a career Foreign Service officer, having served under Presidents of both parties. If he is confirmed, he would be the highest ranking career diplomat in the State Department.

John Kerry called me saying: How can I continue this job I have? I don't have people to do the work. He doesn't even have a lawyer. The State Department doesn't have a lawyer. We have tried to confirm Brian Egan starting back in September 2014, but he has been held up for months and months.

Do you know what this is about? Clinton's emails—Secretary Clinton's emails. If the senior Senator from Iowa is interested in getting answers to his countless letters to the State Department, wouldn't a Senate-confirmed legal advisor be of some help?

Eric Fanning, the President's nominee to be the next Secretary of the Army, is being blocked by the senior Senator from Kansas, even though the senior Senator from Kansas, Mr. ROBERTS, said: "I think [Fanning's] a pretty good nominee." In spite of that, there is no vote on his nomination. The Army needs Mr. Fanning's leadership and responsibility for over a \$200 billion budget for more than 1 million servicemembers. Right now they are

making due at the Pentagon, but we should have a Secretary of the Army.

Unless Republicans change course, these important vacancies will go unfilled for the rest of the Obama administration, and our diplomacy and relationships around the world will continue to suffer because of what is going on here. I do not understand what my Republican colleagues are doing. If Republicans had their way, they would stop confirming officials at just about every key agency.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Senate has confirmed an average of 351 nominations during the first session of the Congress. Last year the Senate didn't even get to half of what it normally does. The Republicans should get to work and schedule votes on the President's nominees.

Valid concerns about the qualifications of these nominees should be brought forth. We haven't heard any, but denying a vote for partisan gain does nothing to strengthen America at home or around the world. The American people deserve better.

This Senator says America is less safe because of what is going on with the Republicans in the Senate. We are not as secure as we should be. We have vacancies for Ambassadors all over the world that are not being filled. People within the State Department, the Treasury Department whose job is to deal with terrorism are being blocked. For the first time in 50 years we don't have anyone reported out of the banking committee. America is less safe because of what Republicans are doing to our country.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2012, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2012) to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murkowski amendment No. 2953, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski (for Cassidy/Markey) amendment No. 2954 (to amendment No. 2953), to provide for certain increases in, and limitations on, the drawdown and sales of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Murkowski (for Shaheen) amendment No. 2968 (to amendment No. 2953), to clarify the definition of the term "smart manufacturing."

Murkowski amendment No. 2963 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify a provision relating to bulk-power system reliability impact statements.

Murkowski (for Barrasso/Schatz) amendment No. 3017 (to amendment No. 2953), to

expand the authority for awarding technology prizes by the Secretary of Energy to include a financial award for separation of carbon dioxide from dilute sources.

Murkowski (for Markey) amendment No. 2982 (to amendment No. 2953), to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a review and submit a report on energy production in the United States and the effects of crude oil exports.

Murkowski (for Crapo) amendment No. 3021 (to amendment No. 2953), to enable civilian research and development of advanced nuclear energy technologies by private and public institutions, to expand theoretical and practical knowledge of nuclear physics, chemistry, and materials science.

Murkowski (for Schatz) amendment No. 2965 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify the funding provided for the Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided between the managers or their designees.

The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, good morning. This morning we are on day 2 of the Energy Policy Modernization Act. Yesterday, we took up this broad, bipartisan energy bill, the first of its kind in more than 8 years. Taking this up was a good moment for the Senate. It was an important step. It is the beginning of a series of steps that we will take to modernizing our Nation's energy as well as our mineral policies. I am hopeful we are going to have a good day of debate today.

As we begin this morning, I would like to summarize very briefly where we are in this process and what Members might expect over the course of the day. As of this morning, we have a total of 89 amendments that have now been filed to the underlying bill. We are already starting to process those amendments. We recognize that some will go by voice vote, some will of course need rollcall votes, and others simply will not be voted at all.

Right now we do have six amendments pending before the body. We have amendment No. 2963 that I have offered, which improves a provision in the underlying bill related to reliability impact statements. We have amendment No. 2968 from Senator SHAHEEN to clarify a definition for the term "smart manufacturing" that is contained within the underlying bill. We have an amendment from Senator MARKEY, amendment No. 2982, to require the Government Accountability Office to study the economic aspects of crude oil exports annually for 3 years. We have an amendment from Senator BARRASSO, amendment No. 3017, to establish a prize for technologies that can separate carbon dioxide molecules from dilute sources such as ambient air.

At noon we are scheduled to proceed to a rollcall vote on amendment No. 3021 to promote research into nuclear energy. There is a strong list of Members who are supporting this amendment: Senators CRAPO and RISCH from Idaho, along with Senator WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island, Senator BOOKER of