

note that three of the four members of the family—since I was just talking about adoption—were, in fact, adopted.

Adrianna was a native of my hometown of Plymouth, MN, where she attended my alma mater, Wayzata High School. She excelled in both academics and athletics and was a 3-year starter on the Wayzata High School women's soccer team. This is a very large suburban high school. The year she was a starter and captain, she led the team to the State championship. She was also the captain of the Wayzata High School hockey team.

She went on to the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado and graduated in 2002. In her senior year, she led the women's rugby team to the national championship title. She was their co-captain, so you can imagine. She was a starter on the soccer team and helped lead that team in high school to a State championship. She was the captain of the hockey team, which is a big deal in Minnesota, of a big high school, and she was also the cocaptain of the rugby team and helped lead that team to a national championship title in the Air Force. We can imagine the leadership Adrianna had shown through her life. She always loved sports—something that was talked about a lot today by her family.

After graduating, she attended the Air Force Special Investigations Academy and was deployed to Iraq until 2005. In 2009 she was selected as an Air Force Institute of Technology student in forensic sciences and earned a master's degree in forensic sciences at George Washington University. In 2010 she became a special agent for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which investigates felony-level crimes committed by or against Air Force personnel in the United States and overseas.

Major Vorderbruggen was also an outspoken opponent to the military's former don't ask, don't tell policy. She and Heather, an Air Force veteran, were among the first servicemembers to marry after the policy was rescinded in 2010. Adrianna chose to serve her country in spite of the military's policy and fought for reform rather than hiding her identity. As her older brother Chris said, "She inspired us all, I think, by just being herself, and being proud to be who she was."

Adrianna was known by her family and friends for her positive attitude and her infectious smile. At the service this morning, her dad remembered Adrianna's ability to remain upbeat even under challenging circumstances. And she loved their little boy, Jacob, who was there today with a loving family around him.

Major Vorderbruggen will be remembered for the work she did in service to her country and the work she did to make sure all brave men and women in uniform receive the honor and the dignity they so rightfully deserve.

I am proud to call Maj. Adrianna Vorderbruggen a daughter of Min-

nesota. She gave her life for a country she loves.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Wilhelmina Marie Wright, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am proud to rise in support of Justice Wilhelmina Wright's confirmation as a district court judge for the District of Minnesota. Justice Wright, as the members of the Judiciary Committee learned during her fine hearing, is a dedicated public servant with a distinguished career spanning the State and Federal legal system. She is the first person in the history of Minnesota to serve at all three levels of the judiciary and receive this nomination. She served as a district court judge in Minnesota, she served for the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and she now serves on the Minnesota Supreme Court. Her 15 years of judicial experience make her ready to do this job on day one, and I can state that when you hear the statistics about the overload for the District of Minnesota, we need her to start tomorrow on day one.

Her qualifications are impeccable. Justice Wright has sat on panels deciding over 2,000 cases and presided over nearly 700. Yet with all those cases and all these opinions, there were no serious questions raised at all about her being biased or unfair in some way in her work as a judge. In fact, it was the opposite. She has the support of former Senator Norm Coleman, a Republican, and many others in our State who have served across the aisle. Her qualifications reveal a thoughtful and a talented jurist, one who applies the law to the facts of each case.

Justice Wright currently serves as associate justice of the Minnesota Su-

preme Court, a position she has had since her appointment in 2012. As the first African-American woman to serve on the court, Justice Wright has earned the respect of litigants, lawyers, and judicial colleagues alike.

Justice Wright was born in Norfolk, VA. She graduated from Yale College cum laude in 1986 and received her law degree from Harvard Law School in 1989. After law school, Justice Wright clerked for Judge Damon Keith of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. She then went into private practice for 5 years at Hogan & Hartson. Before long she felt the pull of public service. She joined the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota and has been a dependable and dedicated leader of the Minnesota legal system ever since that time. During her time as a Federal prosecutor, she received the U.S. Department of Justice Director's Award and the Department's Special Achievement Award.

If you look at her path before she became a judge, every step of the way she excelled. She excelled growing up. She excelled in college and law school in terms of her record. She excelled as a judicial clerk, she excelled in private practice, and she excelled in the U.S. attorney's office, where she received numerous awards. She was then appointed by, I believe, Gov. Jesse Ventura. She did not start her career as a political appointee. He was in the Independent Party. She served as a Ramsey County district court judge from 2000 to 2002, when she was appointed to the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

She served for 10 years until her most recent appointment to the Minnesota Supreme Court. Justice Wright is also involved in a variety of civic and bar activities. She devotes 50 hours per year to educating the public on the law.

If that is not enough, Justice Wright has also worked to improve the legal system. She has been a member of the Minnesota Judicial Council, the Minnesota Courts Public Trust and Confidence Working Group, and the Minnesota State Bar Association Task Force on the Minnesota Bar Association Model Rules of Professional Conduct. In 2006, the Minnesota Women Lawyers honored her with the Myra Bradwell Award for her service, and in 2012 the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers presented her with the President's Award.

The law has always been more than a profession for Justice Wright. It has been central to her own development. Growing up, she watched her parents fight the Norfolk, VA, school system to ensure her access to the same educational opportunities as everyone else. The protections enforced by the legal system were crucial to her family's struggle. As Justice Wright has said about the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*: "Aside from the Bible, that court order was the most important written document in my family's life."

The law worked for Justice Wright. In turn, she has dedicated her own life to the law and to fairness and impartiality.

Justice Wright deserves to be confirmed. As I said, the Judiciary Committee hearing went extremely well. She has the support of many members of the committee. In fact, her nomination went through without an objection when we had the vote. She explained any questions that the members of the Judiciary Committee had—and there were some, obviously. A very good Senator asked a lot of questions on the committee. She explained any question they had about past legal writings from law school and other issues. They felt secure in her nomination and passed her out of committee without any objection. No new issues have been raised since that time. There were no serious questions about the 2,300 cases she handled. I can't think of many nominees we have had with that kind of record.

I would add that this nomination is particularly important to the District of Minnesota. The U.S. Judicial Conference has deemed the current vacancy in our State to be a judicial emergency. Our district caseload has increased significantly in recent years. In 2014, the district saw a 57-percent jump in case filings, with nearly 6,000 Federal cases currently pending. Judge Davis assumed senior status last August, vacating the position for which she has been nominated. Failing to fill this judicial vacancy is failing the people of Minnesota.

I am so proud of my colleagues and thank them for their support, both Democrats and Republicans on the Judiciary Committee who will be voting for her today. Justice Wright is the type of nominee we strive for—the best candidate for the job. We had a bipartisan committee led by two private practice lawyers, one having served as U.S. attorney for the State of Minnesota under the first President Bush and the second President Bush, Tom Heffelfinger. He chaired this committee which looked at so many qualified nominees and made this recommendation to Senator FRANKEN and myself. So this process from the beginning has been completely bipartisan and impeccable and we are proud of that process.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously rated Justice Wright as “well qualified” to serve as a district court judge for the District of Minnesota, which is the highest rating the committee awards. It is based on a confidential peer review of Justice Wright's professional competence, integrity, and judicial temperament.

As Senator Coleman, a former Senator from the State of Minnesota, a Republican Senator, said: “I fully support her nomination and have communicated that to my former colleagues.”

Why does Senator Coleman support this nomination? Because he looked at

the record of a woman of integrity, a woman who had not one case questioned before the very thorough Judiciary Committee, who has the support of many of the Republican Senators—no objections raised when the vote was taken. This is exactly the kind of nominee we want.

Justice Wilhelmina Wright will make a fine Federal district court judge for the District of Minnesota. I urge all my colleagues to support this superb nominee. The people of Minnesota need and deserve a judge of Wilhelmina Wright's caliber. We are proud of our Federal judges in Minnesota. Some came from Democratic administrations, some came out of Republican administrations, but they have always had the reputation of integrity. Justice Wright will continue to uphold that reputation of integrity.

I ask my colleagues to support her.

Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor. I also see that my colleague Senator FRANKEN is here as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank the senior Senator from Minnesota for her remarks about Wilhelmina Wright. I join her in rising not just in strong support but enthusiastic support for Justice Wilhelmina Wright's nomination to serve on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. We call her Justice Wright because she is on the Minnesota Supreme Court. She has been an excellent consensus nominee.

I would like to thank Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member LEAHY for working to ensure that the Judiciary Committee reported out her nomination favorably. I would also like to thank Leader MCCONNELL for scheduling this afternoon's vote.

As of today, Justice Wright's nomination has been pending for 279 days—more than 9 months. The seat she has been nominated to fill has been declared a judicial emergency. So I am pleased the Senate is moving to confirm Justice Wright and that Minnesotans seeking justice will soon be able to have their day in court.

Justice Wright is, without question, the best candidate for this position. Not only did she earn a stellar reputation as a Federal prosecutor in Minnesota, but Justice Wright is the only person in our State's history to serve as a judge at all three levels of Minnesota's judiciary. In her 15 years on the bench, Justice Wright has heard more than 2,000 cases, and none of her rulings in those cases raised concern during her hearing, which is why her nomination was approved without objection by the Judiciary Committee in September. For those who have known her, this comes as no surprise. Justice Wright understands the role of a judge. Her unwavering commitment to fairness and impartiality, as well as her reputation for professionalism, explains why Justice Wright enjoys a

deep well of support in Minnesota from both sides of the aisle, and I emphasize that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR and I formed a bipartisan selection committee to assist us in identifying a nominee for this vacancy. That committee was co-chaired by Tom Heffelfinger, a Republican former U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota under Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. They are two different people, H.W. and W. Bush, both Presidents.

In recommending Justice Wright to Senator KLOBUCHAR and to me, Mr. Heffelfinger said that her nomination “continues the long Minnesota tradition of selecting federal judges based on their professionalism and experience, rather than political connections. Justice Wright embodies everything one could look for in a federal judge: experience, intellectual firepower, a calm and patient demeanor, and a deep personal understanding of the issues facing the people of this country.”

I think everybody on that panel absolutely agreed with Tom Heffelfinger, who is a great public servant. If Tom Heffelfinger, who is a great public figure himself, says those words, they are high praise indeed. And it was echoed by other conservative voices before Justice Wright's hearing before the Judiciary Committee. Chairman GRASSLEY noted that several Republicans had called him to voice support for her nomination. One of those calls came from my colleague in the House, Representative ERIK PAULSEN, who represents Minnesota's Third District.

It is clear to me why the people of my State, regardless of their political persuasion, support her nomination. Justice Wright's integrity, her dedication to public service, and her commitment to equal justice reflect Minnesota values.

I strongly urge that all of my colleagues support Wilhelmina Wright, and I look forward to her confirmation. This is very important. We have other judges who are up for confirmation who come from States such as Iowa and Nebraska. They have been signed off by both of their Senators, including the Presiding Officer. This is a bipartisan commission with bipartisan support, and I urge all of my colleagues to vote for Justice Wilhelmina Wright, who now sits on the Minnesota Supreme Court, to sit on the Federal district court.

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

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday, our Nation celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is a hero to millions of Americans for

helping to break down racial barriers in this country. It is fitting that today the Senate is turning to a confirmation vote that will increase racial diversity on our Federal bench. Justice Wilhelmina Wright is nominated to a judicial emergency vacancy on the U.S. District Court for the District of Minnesota. Justice Wright currently serves on the Minnesota Supreme Court. She is the first African-American woman to serve on that court and the first person in Minnesota history to serve as a judge at all three levels of the State judiciary.

I commend Senators KLOBUCHAR and FRANKEN for their tireless efforts in helping to move this nomination to a vote. A vote on her nomination is long overdue. Justice Wright was nominated in April 2015, over 9 months ago. She was reported out of the Judiciary Committee by unanimous voice vote over 4 months ago. After months of needless delay, we could and should have voted to confirm her at the end of the last session.

I know Justice Wright will make a superb Federal judge. Since 2012, she has served as an associate justice on the Minnesota Supreme Court. From 2002 to 2012, she served on the Minnesota Court of Appeals, and prior to her tenure on that court, she was the first African-American to serve as a judge on the district court in the second judicial district, Ramsey County, Minnesota, from 2000 to 2002. In her 15-year judicial career, Justice Wright has presided over or served on panels that decided more than 2,000 cases.

Prior to her appointment to the bench, she was a Federal prosecutor for the district of Minnesota for 5 years. Justice Wright graduated with her B.A., cum laude, from Yale University and earned her law degree from Harvard Law School. Upon graduating from law school, she clerked for Judge Damon J. Keith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. With her considerable professional experience, it is no surprise that the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has unanimously rated her "Well Qualified" to serve on the district court, its highest rating. She also has the enthusiastic support of her home State Senators, Senators FRANKEN and KLOBUCHAR.

Based on her wealth of judicial experience and broad support, I cannot think of any good reason why Justice Wright should not be confirmed with an overwhelming vote.

After Justice Wright is confirmed, there will be votes under a bipartisan agreement on three other district court nominees—one to the district of New Jersey, one to the southern district of Iowa, and one to the northern district of Iowa. These nominees will be confirmed by President's Day. After we return to session in February, I hope that Republican leadership will continue to schedule nominees for confirmation votes to address the 72 current judicial vacancies that we face today, 32 of which are judicial emergencies.

A Politico article last week discussed demands from certain extreme conservative groups for Republican leadership to shut down the confirmation process and block all judicial confirmations for the remainder of the year. I am hopeful that the majority leader will not let moneyed Washington interests decide whether we will uphold our Senatorial oath to provide advice and consent to the President on judicial nominations. Shutting down all judicial confirmations would be a dangerous departure from prior practice. In the last 5 Presidential election years, the Senate has confirmed an average of 30 judicial nominees in the final year prior to Election Day. As both chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, I have worked with Republicans to confirm judicial nominees, report nominees out of committee, and hold hearings for nominees well into September of Presidential election years.

This was the case in 2008, when I was chairman of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm judicial nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year. In fact, Senate Democrats helped confirm all 10 of President Bush's district court nominees pending on the Senate floor in a single day by unanimous consent on September 26, 2008. This was similarly true in 2004, when I was ranking member of the committee with a Republican President, and we worked to confirm nominees as late as September of the Presidential election year.

Any attempt to shut down the judicial confirmation process to satisfy moneyed Washington interests would be wrong. It would only work to harm our justice system and the American people we were elected to represent. Outstanding nominees from Tennessee, Maryland, New Jersey, Nebraska, New York, and California have been pending on the floor for months. Nearly all of them would fill emergency vacancies. Votes on these nominees must be scheduled without further delay.

In addition to these pending nominees, there are also four Pennsylvania district court nominees and a Rhode Island nominee that the Senate Judiciary Committee is poised to report out this month. And in committee, nominees from States represented by Republican Senators—including Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin, and Indiana—continue to wait for a hearing. It is up to the Senators from those States to urge their leadership to consider these nominees without delay so they can serve the people of those great States.

I urge a vote for her confirmation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time on both sides be yielded back.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of

Wilhelmina Marie Wright, of Minnesota, to be United States District Judge for the District of Minnesota?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, 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. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 58, nays 36, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 3 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Alexander	Feinstein	Mikulski
Ayotte	Flake	Murphy
Baldwin	Franken	Murray
Bennet	Gillibrand	Nelson
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Reed
Boxer	Heinrich	Reid
Brown	Heitkamp	Schatz
Cantwell	Hirono	Schumer
Capito	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Stabenow
Carper	Kirk	Tester
Casey	Klobuchar	Udall
Coats	Leahy	Vitter
Collins	Manchin	Warner
Coons	Markey	Warren
Corker	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Donnelly	McConnell	Wyden
Durbin	Menendez	
Ernst	Merkley	

NAYS—36

Barrasso	Heller	Portman
Blunt	Hoeven	Risch
Boozman	Inhofe	Roberts
Burr	Isakson	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Sasse
Cochran	Lankford	Sessions
Cotton	Lee	Shelby
Crapo	McCain	Sullivan
Daines	Moran	Thune
Enzi	Murkowski	Tillis
Fischer	Paul	Toomey
Gardner	Perdue	Wicker

NOT VOTING—6

Cornyn	Graham	Sanders
Cruz	Rubio	Scott

The nomination was confirmed.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

The majority leader is recognized.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business,