

today. As we sometimes say back home: I've got some good news; I've got some bad news. On the good news side, we are here today to confirm Attorney General Scott Pruitt to be the next Administrator of the EPA. While he should have been passed through the Senate weeks ago, we are here now. We are here today. We are going to get it done in a couple of hours. That is good news.

As they say about Montana, we are a unique blend of Merle Haggard and John Denver, and mastering that melody is always a challenge. When you do, it results in a commonsense approach to environmental stewardship, and I can tell you Scott Pruitt is the guy to do it.

I literally left my office to come here and make these remarks, and guess who I was meeting with in my office. It was Scott Pruitt.

You know what we talked about?

He came into my office. When you come into my office, you can see Montana all over the walls. You are going to see me with a fly rod in my hand. You are going to see pictures of trout that we have caught and released back into the streams and rivers of our State. We talked about fly fishing in Yellowstone Park. He loves to fly-fish.

In fact, he asked to me: Do you know where Cooke City, MT, is?

I said: Scott, Cooke City, MT? Let me show you. I have a map of the Beartooth in my office with pins in all the lakes that I have blown to. In fact, I spent 65 miles in the Beartooth Wilderness in August on horseback and on foot, above 10,000 feet, with an elk hair caddis and my fly rod, chasing golden trout and cutthroat trout. We spent a lot of time talking about that. We talked about elk hunting and deer hunting in Montana.

Scott Pruitt understands the important role that States play, especially in a State like Montana. I am confident he is going to restore this balanced focus, this Merle Haggard and John Denver balance that Montanans are pleading for. He will bring that back to the EPA, rather than this heavy-handed Gina McCarthy out-of-touch Federal approach.

Let me tell you a couple of stories of what is going on in Montana and why Scott Pruitt is exactly the right guy for the job. Today in the small town of Colstrip, MT, they face a real struggle to survive. Colstrip is a generating station and neighboring mine and the lifeblood of this small town.

Over the years, the Colstrip plant has continued to develop. They have adopted new technologies, and they made remarkable reductions in emissions and pollution. Yet it has been met with an onslaught of new environmental regulations that are having drastic compliance costs on our State.

Let me share some of those. Under this EPA power plan that was launched by Gina McCarthy, Montana needs to cut its emissions by 47 percent—the largest reduction in the Nation, lead-

ing almost inevitably to the entire shutdown of Colstrip.

In fact, according to a study conducted by the University of Montana, they said this plan will cost our State 7,000 jobs, \$500 million in lost revenues, and \$1.5 billion in gross sales for our State. And Montana moves from being an energy exporter to being an energy importer. That is outrageous, and the people of Montana know it.

For what? For what the Obama administration had projected to have a 0.02-degree impact on global temperature in the next 100 years—negligible. In fact, I confronted Gina McCarthy on that in a hearing, and she did not refute my data.

Similarly, the waters of the United States serves yet another example of the detrimental effects of Gina McCarthy's and President Obama's EPA, which has harmed Montana's farmers and ranchers. As I mentioned, one of my favorite things to do is get into the fresh air of Montana, the clean waters of Montana, up in wilderness country with my fly rod in my hand. We all want clean water. We all want clean air. I have yet to meet a single Montanan who says I don't want clean air; I don't want clean water.

The WOTUS rule was a clear effort by the Obama administration to gain control over Montana's livelihoods. It was a private property taking, seeking to regulate virtually every ditch and pond that could be occasionally wet across the State of Montana.

While, thankfully, this incredible overreach by the EPA and the Obama administration has been stopped by the courts, I am looking forward to working with Scott Pruitt to defend Montana farmers and ranchers and to defend Montana property owners from this unnecessary and harmful rule.

Scott Pruitt understands the important role our States play and not to levy unnecessary and overreaching Federal regulations—regulations that could decimate a State's economy. That is unacceptable.

I will tell what you else I talked to Scott Pruitt about; that is, the importance of cleaning up our Superfund sites. This is a critical responsibility of the EPA. We need to unleash American innovation, American cooperation—not cut off affordable energy sources at its heels.

Regarding Superfund cleanup, as Scott and I concluded our meeting, we talked about the Berkeley Pit in Butte. He has committed to getting that environmental disaster cleaned up. He assured me he will address these issues head-on.

The largest Superfund site in the United States is right there in Butte, MT. We had snow geese that came across our State migrating. They landed in the toxic waters in the Berkeley Pit, and thousands of snow geese died just by landing in the water. Scott is committed to getting that fixed. It has been on the list for over 20 years. It is time to fix it, and Scott is committed, saying: Let's get this done.

That is why he is going to be a great Administrator, to protect the environment in Montana.

That is the good news. We are going to move Scott Pruitt through today, and I am looking forward to casting a "yes" vote for our next Administrator of the EPA.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Let me share the bad news. Just this morning, Leader MCCONNELL came here to move Congressman ZINKE's nomination to be the next Secretary of Interior and debate that on the floor. Let's have unanimous consent; let's get that done.

Guess what. The Democrats objected. Why?

RYAN ZINKE and I went to Boise State in 1979. He will be the first Cabinet appointee in the history of the State of Montana going back to statehood of 1889, and the Democrats are blocking us from getting that done today for no good reason.

He passed with a bipartisan vote of 16 to 6 in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He is going to be an outstanding addition to President Trump's Cabinet. I don't understand why it is being blocked.

We can get that done this afternoon—done. Let's get it done now. Instead, RYAN ZINKE is being stopped from assuming his position as Secretary of the Interior. Guess what. We have a long list of things to do in Interior.

I am the chairman of the National Park Subcommittee. We have a backlog of maintenance. We have to get ZINKE in place now to start strengthening our national parks. He is going to be a great addition.

I am pleading with my colleagues. I am asking why. Give me a good reason why you are objecting to moving Congressman ZINKE's nomination forward now? Why are you holding up this historic vote for Montana?

This will be the longest a President has waited for his team to be in place since George Washington. It is ridiculous. We need a Secretary of the Interior who will be a westerner, one who understands that Montana is that balance between Merle Haggard and John Denver; a Secretary who understands that, in Montana, our largest neighbor is the Federal Government; and a Secretary who understands how important our national parks are for us and for the 6 million folks who visit them every year. RYAN ZINKE is a great guy for that job, but we can't even have a vote. So we wait.

We wait on the Democrats' political games to unfold. We wait on Democrats' political posturing. We wait on the Democrats' next delay tactic.

Montanans are saying: You know what, we are tired of these reindeer games. Let's put the President's team in place. Let's at least move RYAN ZINKE through in the next couple of hours.

That should not be a heavy lift, but they are obstructing putting Congressman RYAN ZINKE, who is ready to go—

a Navy SEAL—to be the next Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. GARDNER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DAINES. I will.

Mr. GARDNER. I thank my colleague from the great State of Montana.

During the debate on the floor just a while ago, we heard more debate on something that is very near and dear to my heart; that is, the matter of the Gold King Mine and the EPA's self-admitted responsibility on spilling 3 million gallons of toxic sludge into the Animas River in Colorado.

The debate around the floor and my comments this morning have centered on the EPA's admitted liability and fault in spilling millions of gallons of sludge into a river, promising they would make the claims, pay for the injury that occurred, and then denying those claims and walking away.

Had the private sector been involved, my question to the Senator is this: If the private sector admitted guilt in spilling 3 million gallons of toxic waste into a river, would they be held accountable?

Mr. DAINES. I am not sure if that is a direct question or a rhetorical question. Of course, CORY—the Senator from Colorado—they would be held accountable, and that is why we need to hold the Superfund sites. We need to hold sites, like what happened here with the mine in Colorado—hold the EPA accountable for that.

Mr. GARDNER. If the Senator would yield, what the EPA has stated is admitting fault, admitting and promising that they would pay for those who were injured, and then just weeks ago, as the previous administration was ending, they denied every single one of the private claimants. The Senator has talked about Scott Pruitt at EPA.

When I spoke with the Administrator-designate of EPA, Scott Pruitt said they would make the private claimants whole; that they would pay the Navajo Nation; that they would pay the claims made by outfitters who were shut down.

Will the Senator help me make sure that the EPA stands up to its obligations and recognize that Scott Pruitt—at both the EPW confirmation hearing and to me—has committed that the EPA will do what they did not do; that is, to make our citizens whole?

Mr. DAINES. We will work together on that.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the nomination of Scott Pruitt.

I understand when we hit high noon, there will be time for prayer. You tell me, and we will yield back and get this done.

I want to talk about the nomination of Scott Pruitt and how this important vote will impact my home State. So many folks call Montana home today because their parents or grandparents

or great-grandparents pushed west to start a new life in the homestead era. My family is no different.

I am proud and honored that my wife and I are still able to farm the land that my grandparents homesteaded over a century ago. I know that it does not matter if you are growing alfalfa, winter wheat, spring wheat, safflower, or garbanzo beans. I know it doesn't matter if you are raising cattle or sheep or hogs. You have to have access to clean water or you cannot succeed in agriculture.

In Montana, agriculture is the number one industry. Local economies around our State are driven by that agriculture economy, whether it is farms or ranches. In a good year, our State's wheat production alone will clear a trillion dollars.

This production not only helps create jobs and farms and ranches but it boosts the bottom line for the local grocery store, the hardware store, and local construction crews keep busy. Agriculture is the backbone of Montana's economy, but it is not the only industry in Montana that relies on clean air and clean water.

Montana's outdoor economy is growing rapidly every year. Hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping generate over \$6 billion and sustain over 64,000 jobs in Montana each and every year. More folks are visiting Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks every summer.

And when they visit, these folks spend millions of dollars in communities outside the parks. Communities like Gardner, Livingston, Coram, and Columbia Falls constantly have packed restaurants and bars and hotels, thanks to our clean water and our clean air. Folks are flocking to Montana because of those assets.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule IV, paragraph 2, the hour of 12 noon having arrived, the Senate having been in continuous session since yesterday, the Senate will suspend for a prayer from the Senate Chaplain.

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the fountain of blessings, may we rest and wait patiently for You. You are the Author and Finisher of our faith, so empower us to embrace Your precepts and walk in Your path.

Lord, prepare our lawmakers to be instruments for Your glory. Inspired by Your Spirit, may they humble themselves, praying fervently, seeking Your face, and turning from evil. Respond to their fervent pursuit of You by bringing healing to our hearts, Nation, and world. Deliver our Senators from evil, and guide them around the obstacles that hinder their progress. Forgive them when they delay the good they can do now, waiting for a more convenient season.

Lord, remember the many staff members and others who have worked long hours through the night. Compensate

them for their sacrifices and for their commitment to You and country.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, folks are coming to Montana from all over this country because of our clean air and clean water and the habitat it provides. Not only Montanans, but this entire country respects clean air and clean water. In fact, in Montana, it is Montana's Constitution that says we value clean air and clean water.

The reason we place such a high importance on clean air and clean water is because we see what happens when it is put at risk. On numerous occasions, Montanans have been victims to corporations who treated Montana like a Third World country. They reaped the value of our natural resources, and then they left the American taxpayer to clean up the mess. Folks like the Anaconda Company, W.R. Grace, Glencore, just to name a few.

They left a mess. It wasn't the EPA that left that mess. It was these corporations, and it is the EPA's job to make sure they clean up this mess, not out of the pocketbook of the American taxpayer. These folks, these corporations, have put our clean air and clean water at risk. Not only did they contaminate the land, they contaminated our local economies. One of the largest Superfund sites in this country is in Butte, MT. It took 16 years, nearly \$150 million to clean up just a portion—just a small portion of what the Anaconda Company left behind after mining copper in Southwest Montana.

In Libby, hundreds of people have died, and over 1,000 people are ill because of asbestosis due to asbestos exposure. Even though a local vermiculite mine closed in 1990, folks are still getting sick due to asbestos-related diseases.

And for years, I have been fighting alongside the folks at Columbia Falls, MT, to hold Glencore accountable to that community for the cyanide and arsenic they left abandoned on the banks of the Flathead River near the gateway of Glacier National Park.

Companies that put our clean water at risk cannot be trusted because they never stick around to clean up the mess they have made. We have seen it firsthand. And that is why we need an EPA Administrator who is going to side with the American taxpayer, with local economies, with local families, and hold the polluters and contaminators accountable for their shortsighted actions.

It is for these reasons that I cannot support Scott Pruitt's nomination for Administrator of the EPA. Throughout his career, he has consistently sided with the big polluters over the local businesses and the local families.

I am not convinced that Mr. Pruitt understands the critical role that clean air and clean water plays in agriculture and our outdoor economies. In my conversations with Mr. Pruitt, I received no assurances that he will be a

champion for Montana's family farmers, ranchers, those who love to hunt, fish, and hike in Big Sky Country. Mr. Pruitt has endorsed policies that will put Montana jobs at risk and put our outdoor heritage on the ropes.

Don't just take my word for it. Thousands of Montanans have contacted my office regarding Mr. Pruitt's nomination. Caitlin from Libby wrote me:

No community understands the grave impact lack of regulation or failure to enforce environmental regulations can have on a community like Libby does. Four hundred people died in Libby because W.R. Grace mined vermiculite that was contaminated with asbestos. . . . These people died . . . when they were just doing their job. Libby doesn't want or need another person that looks the other way while big corporations prey on hard-working people.

Stephen from Corvallis wrote:

I am a farmer in Montana, and I regularly use pesticides, where I hope the EPA has my back to make sure these things are safe for me and the environment. . . . Farming continues to be less predictable, due to a change in climate. I want someone in that position that has my back as a farmer, not someone that questions broad scientific consensus.

Rich is a retired public lands manager from Stevensville who wrote me saying this about Pruitt:

Is not fit to be leading an agency responsible for protecting wildlife, clean water, clean air, and leading the charge of addressing a changing climate. Pruitt is anti-science, routinely disregarding well-established studies involving climate change. I recently retired . . . the thought of the possible damage and undoing of what I've lived and worked for over my [entire] life by this man is disheartening to say the least.

Look, folks, the Earth's climate is changing. There is no ifs, ands, or buts about that. If we want to be able to continue to take our fly rod and go fishing down those rivers, you have to have somebody in the EPA who will ensure that we have clean water and clean air. I will tell you something that happened in Montana for the first time this year. The Yellowstone River closed. The bottom reason for it was the water warmed that much. If you are going to have good habitat for fisheries, if you are going to have good habitat for elk and big game hunting, if you are going to be able to go up in the mountains and hike, fish, bike, and do the things we do in Montana, you have to have somebody in the EPA that makes a difference.

What we do today will not be felt today. It will be felt tomorrow. That is why today we need a man in the position of EPA who will fight for clean water and clean air. It is critical to our survival, no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

Stephen, Caitlyn and Rich are right. We need folks in the administration who will stand up and understand the value of clean air and clean water. Unfortunately, the President has nominated someone who can't deliver. Therefore, I will oppose Mr. Pruitt's nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator PETERS be allowed to speak for 5 minutes, followed by Senator CARPER for 10 minutes, followed by Senator BARASSO for 10 minutes.

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

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I stand today to express my opposition to the nomination of Scott Pruitt as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Pruitt's track record does not demonstrate a commitment to addressing critical natural resource issues.

As Oklahoma's attorney general, he joined forces with polluters to sue the Environmental Protection Agency again and again, to undermine the safeguards for clean air and for clean water.

I am also dismayed he has not yet committed to recusing himself on those pending lawsuits, if confirmed. Not once, not one single time has he pressed the EPA for more action to protect public health or the environment. He has defined his career by undermining laws that prevent people from getting sick and safeguard the environment from degradation.

In addition, Mr. Pruitt refuses to release thousands of emails related to his ties to special interests, including corporations that may have donated to his political campaigns. These connections to very big energy interests are relevant, given Mr. Pruitt's history of copying and pasting industry requests directly onto his attorney general office's letterhead.

It is very difficult to fully evaluate his record without these emails made public. Just yesterday, an Oklahoma State district judge ruled that Mr. Pruitt's office will have until Tuesday to turn over these emails.

Unfortunately, the Senate will vote on his nomination in just a moment, before these documents are released, and give the American people an opportunity to see what they contain.

I would strongly urge that the nomination vote be postponed until these emails are released, and they can be fully considered. The EPA Administrator must be someone who is committed to improving and enforcing laws and regulations that safeguard clean air and clean water for all Americans.

Mr. Pruitt's record of undermining critical health and environmental protections demonstrate that he is simply not the right person to lead the EPA. I urge my colleagues to oppose Mr. Pruitt's nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, a few minutes ago, we stopped everything right here. Stopped. And the Chaplain of the U.S. Senate came in, Barry Black, retired Navy Admiral, and gave a prayer.

We have a Bible study group that meets every Thursday. We met yester-

day in JIM INHOFF's hideaway. Every time we meet, almost without exception, Chaplain Black reminds us, Democrats and Republicans—those of us who need the most help—he reminds us that of all the times the Scripture is invoked, we should ask for wisdom.

Well, I ask for wisdom every night for myself, my colleagues in the Senate, over in the House, the President, the Vice President, their spouses, every night, that we have the opportunity to gain some wisdom.

When Scott Pruitt was nominated to be the Administrator for EPA, I sent him a letter December 28, asking 52 questions, asking for responses by January 10. They didn't come by January 10. We had a hearing January 18. I got some answers, not all. One thing I also asked for, also asked for by Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, was access to what the folks had been asking for from the Center for Media and Democracy for 2 years; that is, access to thousands of emails in the AG's office, and their back and forth with the fossil fuel industry, oil, natural gas, coal, a variety of others. We would like to have access to those emails.

When Mr. Pruitt went before our committee for his hearing on January 18, he was asked the question: Do you promise to provide information reasonably requested by committees here in the United States Senate and the Congress, including in electronic form? He said, yes, but he didn't do it. In fact, for 2 years, the AG's office fought off efforts to try to gain access to that information, electronic media. It took a judge calling an emergency meeting yesterday in Oklahoma to say to the attorney general's office: You have to turn this information over. Normally, you know how long a 4-year request takes in Oklahoma to get results like this? We are talking maybe 2 months. This was over 2 years.

Finally, we are going to get access to those emails. There may be a reason why they were so reluctant to share those emails with us. We are going to find out starting next Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, when we get them. If we don't vote to support Senator MERKLEY's proposal, to put off the vote until the Monday after we come back from recess, we will not have the opportunity to take advantage of what the judge—I don't know if it is by Divine intervention, but this judge has given us the opportunity to gain wisdom, to make a smarter decision, to make a better informed decision. If we vote up or down on Mr. Pruitt's nomination today, we pass up a great opportunity to get a fuller picture.

Now, my Republican friends will say: He sat through the longest hearing of any EPA Administrator in the history of our country. He has answered 1,000 questions.

Let me just say that Gina McCarthy answered more when she was the last EPA Administrator. She answered more—quite a few more, actually. She took a little extra time to actually answer the questions.

So many of the responses we got to the thousands of questions for the record asked of this nominee—the answers were evasive, they were incomplete, and sometimes they were just totally nonresponsive. You can say he answered all the questions, but how well? How thoroughly? How responsively? Not so good. Not so good.

Friends, I want to put up here on the board—I have a board here. Let's look at the third one.

Mr. President, how much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Five and a half minutes.

Mr. CARPER. We have heard from a lot of folks, different views on what we ought to be doing. One of them was from a fellow whose name is Kyle Meyaard-Schaap. Who is Mr. Schaap? Good question. Mr. Schaap is the leader or one of the spokespersons from a group—if I can find it here; here we go—spokesperson for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action.

He wrote us about Mr. Pruitt's nomination. Here is what he had to say:

If Scott Pruitt embraces his own self-described pro-life stance, he should fight to protect vulnerable lives from birth to natural death—the lives of children born and unborn, the elderly, people of color—from environmental pollution. He should work tirelessly to ensure that everyone has clean water and air. He should strengthen, not eviscerate, an agency equipped to honor God's mandate to steward and care for the creation.

Mr. Meyaard-Schaap goes on to say:

As Oklahoma attorney general, however, [Mr. Pruitt] has done just the opposite. He has had the chance to protect people from pollution and the harms of climate change. Instead, he has brought multiple lawsuits against the EPA to overturn measures that would safeguard clean water and air. He had the chance to defend policies that cut the power plant pollution that fuels climate change and pollutes our air. Instead, he cast doubt on climate change and downplayed the moral imperative to safeguard our climate and environment. He had a chance to assist EPA in its mission to protect public health. Instead, he questioned its mission entirely and sought to defend industry from regulation.

We all have an obligation to protect the health of our children, families, and the world in which we live. For me, this is not only my responsibility as a parent and official elected to serve the people of Delaware, it is a moral calling.

I sat for 8 years as a member of the National Governors Association. For 7 years, this lady sat right next to me. She was the Governor of New Jersey. She went on to become the Administrator of the EPA—the very position to which Scott Pruitt has been nominated. She is not a Democrat. She is not a progressive. She is not a knee-jerk liberal. She is a Republican. She was not only the Governor of her State for 7 years, but she was the head of EPA for a number of years under George W. Bush. Here is what she basically said about Scott Pruitt, her words, not mine. She said: “[I] can't re-

call ever having seen an appointment of someone who was so disdainful of the agency and the science behind what the agency does.” That bears repeating. “[I] can't recall ever having seen an appointment of someone who is so disdainful of the agency and the science behind what the agency does.” Those are powerful words.

Just as I think that the idea of waiting another week or so to get the wisdom that those thousands of emails might contain—we don't have to wait for the wisdom from this woman who has walked in these shoes, serving her State as Governor and serving this country as the leader of the Agency that protects our public health for all of us. My hope is that our colleagues will not ignore this wisdom.

Lastly, I will say this: Come next Thursday, Friday, we are going to start getting the information from these emails. We will find out if there is fire where there is smoke or not. If there is nothing there, then there is nothing there, but if there is something there, I just want to say to my Republican friends, if you are ready to vote for this nominee without this complete information that we could have here to be put to use in a positive way within 10 days from now, you pass up a big opportunity.

We are in a sense, by voting on this nomination without this information, flying blind. I am an old naval flight officer, 23 years as a naval flight officer, retired Navy captain. In Southeast Asia, you flew into monsoons and really bad weather sometimes. We never wanted to fly blind. We always wanted to have a good weather forecast. We want to avoid the places we ought to avoid. We wanted to fly at altitudes that were safe. We wanted to use our radars to be able to find the pockets to go through to be safe. We never wanted to fly blind.

If we basically, before we close up shop, vote for this nominee with incomplete information, we are flying blind. It wasn't a very smart thing to do in naval aviation, and it would not be a smart thing for us to do here.

This is not a warning; this is just friendly advice from one colleague to another: It is worth waiting an extra week to get this information rather than voting today without it. Again, the words of our Chaplain Barry Black always invoking us to ask for wisdom—I have asked for it. The wisdom that I would impart to all of us today: Hit the pause button. Get the information next week. Make our decision then.

I yield back my time. Thanks so much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the past weeks, we have seen Democrats continue to use one delaying tactic after another on the floor of the Senate. They have tried to slow down the confirmation of many of the administration's most important nomi-

nees. We have seen it time and again. We have seen it in agencies all across the government, including right now the Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA. Democrats are just wasting time, and they are doing it intentionally. They are not protecting our environment, not one bit. They are not safeguarding the health of the American people, not at all.

Government agencies like the EPA and one after another need their leadership in place and they need it in place now. What they don't need, what the American people don't need, is more political theater from the Senate Democrats.

We have heard a lot about Scott Pruitt's nomination to be Administrator of the EPA. Much of what we heard from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle has simply not been true.

I want to set the record straight. As head of the EPA, Scott Pruitt will protect the environment. During his 6 years as attorney general for the State of Oklahoma, Mr. Pruitt has stood up to polluters, he has worked across State lines, and he has worked across party lines. He has done it to lower phosphorous levels in the Illinois River. He actually negotiated a water rights settlement with Oklahoma tribes. Why? Well, to preserve scenic lakes and rivers. He used commonsense policies. He used them to protect the environment in Oklahoma, and he will follow commonsense policies at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The delays we have seen by Democrats have never actually been about Mr. Pruitt or his record or the answers he has given to questions about his qualifications. He has answered over 1,200 questions. He has answered four rounds of questions in committee, went for 6½ hours. Members on the other side said these were very fair hearings. These delays are all about obstruction. They are all about denying President Trump his Cabinet. That is what this is all about. It is about pretending that their candidate Hillary Clinton did not lose the election in November. That is what this is all about.

We have seen them use the same tactics on one Cabinet nominee after another. As the Cabinet nominees were named, what we saw was a list of eight nominees come out who Senator SCHUMER had as his hit list of nominees he was going to oppose, slow down, obstruct, boycott. Democrats delayed. They delayed again. They delayed again. That is what we saw in one after another.

When Scott Pruitt is confirmed today, he will take office later than any incoming EPA Administrator for any new administration going back to the 1980s.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle need to recognize that the terrible precedent they are setting today with all of these relentless and needless delays will continue into the future. It is a precedent, just like the precedent that Harry Reid set when he changed

the rules of the Senate by breaking the rules. The Democrats need to see how their actions will continue to play forward, will affect the confirmation process for all future administrations, including Democratic administrations.

The American people want someone in place to run these important Departments. What we see from the Democrats is political theater on the floor of the Senate.

President Trump deserves to have his team in place. President Trump deserves to have his Cabinet in place. The Cabinet nominees deserve an up-or-down vote from the Senate on the floor of the Senate. That is what we are going to do today with Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who is qualified and who has been nominated to be the Administrator of the EPA.

Scott Pruitt will protect our environment, and he will protect the health of all Americans. He is the right person for the job.

Mr. FRANKEN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BARRASSO. At the end of my remarks, I will yield for a question.

So I say to you, as I come here to the floor, I chaired the Environment and Public Works Committee on Scott Pruitt's nomination. I listened to 6½ hours of testimony. I listened to and read through responses that he gave to 1,200 questions that were asked of him. He gave thorough answers—perhaps not the answers the Democrats wanted to hear but answers that I felt were responsive.

So I come to the floor to urge all of my colleagues to support Mr. Pruitt's nomination to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. He is a nominee who, as attorney general in Oklahoma, protected the environment, worked to strengthen the economy, and stood up for States' rights, which continues to be most crucial.

With that, Mr. President, I yield for a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, would my friend, the Senator from Wyoming, read back the part that he said earlier in the speech about Democrats doing this, the reasons we are delaying? Would he do me that favor?

The reason I am raising this is that we had a parliamentary question back when ELIZABETH WARREN was speaking on the Sessions nomination which, I guess, the majority leader questioned whether she was, in that case, questioning the motives or actions of a fellow Senator.

It seems to me that the Senator from Wyoming, whom I respect, was doing the same about Democrats in the Senate.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, responding to the Senator from Minnesota, I think he may be referring to a part where I say: The delays by Democrats have never actually been about Mr. Pruitt's answers to questions

or about his qualifications. These delays, I say, are all about obstruction and denying President Trump his Cabinet. I go on to say: It is about pretending that their candidate, Hillary Clinton, didn't lose the Presidential election.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I have a parliamentary inquiry for the Parliamentarian.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will state his parliamentary inquiry, please.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, it seems to me that that is imputing to Democrats' actions and motives not becoming of a U.S. Senator.

Mr. BARRASSO. Well, Mr. President, it is my—

Mr. FRANKEN. I made a parliamentary inquiry, and I would appreciate an answer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In the opinion of the Chair, they do not violate the rule.

Mr. BARRASSO addressed the Chair.

Mr. FRANKEN. Can I get some explanation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, this is a very highly politicized situation. It is not my intention in any way to impugn any of the motives of any of the Members of this body.

I yield back my time.

Regular order.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, can I have a minute?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the motion to extend postclosure debate.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, may I ask the Chair for permission to speak for a minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator will proceed.

Mr. FRANKEN. Thank you. I had no intention of actually filing a rule XIX objection. My point is—and the reason is because I didn't want to delay things.

But we have a nominee here who has sued the EPA 18 times. The reason we are doing this is because we don't think this nominee is qualified. It has nothing to do with us not recognizing the results of the election, and I actually take offense to that.

I don't know why the Presiding Officer ruled the way he did because I think it is obvious that it is imputing motives unbecoming to Senators, by saying that we don't recognize the legitimacy of the election and we are pretending that Hillary Clinton won the election.

I am just raising this as a point, which is that Senators do this routinely, and if every time we raised a rule XIX on something like that, we would delay—if you want to accuse people of delaying the Senate—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired. Begin to wrap up, please.

Mr. FRANKEN. I appreciate it. I thank very much the Presiding Officer

and I thank the Senator from Wyoming.

I am just making a point here.

Mr. BARRASSO. Regular order.

VOTE ON MOTION TO EXTEND DEBATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to extend postclosure debate.

Mr. McCONNELL. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 47, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 70 Ex.]

YEAS—47

Baldwin	Harris	Nelson
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Sanders
Brown	Hirono	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Merkley	Whitehouse
Franken	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	

NAYS—51

Alexander	Fischer	Paul
Barrasso	Flake	Perdue
Blunt	Gardner	Portman
Boozman	Graham	Risch
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Capito	Hatch	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Cochran	Hoeben	Sasse
Collins	Inhofe	Scott
Corker	Isakson	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson	Strange
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Toomey
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young

NOT VOTING—2

Donnelly	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 51.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the votes following the first vote in the series be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

There will now be 4 minutes of debate, equally divided, on the nomination.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Delaware.