

sort of a given, because the American people spoke in their selection of the President of the United States, taking into consideration those responsibilities the President would have. So, therefore, for those reasons, I voted for most of President Obama's nominees, as I did most of President Clinton's nominees. Now we are in a position where we are so polarized that even a man of the qualifications of Judge Gorsuch is now opposed by our friends on the other side of the aisle.

I say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, and I say to my friends on this side of the aisle: That is not the way the Senate was designed to work. The Senate was designed for us to communicate, for us to work together, for us to understand the results and repercussions of a free and fair election. It is about time we sat down together and tried to do some things for the American people in a bipartisan fashion. This near-hysterical opposition that I see from my friends on the other side of the aisle does not bode well for what we know we need to do.

Madam President, I recognize the presence of the distinguished Senator from Utah, and I say "distinguished" because both he and I are of advanced age.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I really appreciate my colleague for his comments. He is one of the great Senators here, and we all pay attention to what he has to say, especially on foreign policy and military affairs, but also on so many other things as well. People ought to be listening to what he is saying with regard to this judgeship. I have great respect for Senator McCAIN and always will. He is one of the truly great Senators in this body. I just wish my colleagues on the other side would pay a little more attention to what he is having to say here today. So I thank the Senator.

NOMINATION OF HEATHER WILSON

Madam President, I rise today in strong support of the confirmation of Dr. Heather Wilson to be the 24th Secretary of the Air Force.

I have had the privilege of knowing Dr. Wilson since her election to Congress, where she distinguished herself as a member of the House Intelligence Committee. In my interactions with Dr. Wilson in the Intelligence Committee, it quickly became apparent that she is a person of great intellect and exceptional character. But this should come as no surprise since she has always achieved a level of excellence in each of her endeavors.

Dr. Wilson knew success from an early age. She made history as one of the first female graduates of the Air Force Academy. At the academy, she thrived as a student, eventually earning a Rhodes scholarship to attend Oxford University, where she earned a Ph.D. in international relations.

Dr. Wilson then wrote a well-received book titled "International Law and the

Use of Force by National Liberation Movements." As a lawyer, I was particularly impressed by Dr. Wilson's in-depth analysis of international law. What is all the more impressive is that the book was published as she was serving as Director of Defense Policy and Arms Control for the National Security Council.

Dr. Wilson's commitment to national security was evident when she served in the House of Representatives from 1998 to 2009. When she left the House after more than a decade of service, Congress' loss was South Dakota's gain. In 2013, she became the president of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. There, she showed extraordinary skill in leading a large institution.

In sum, Dr. Heather Wilson is a person of great intellect, strong management skills, and superlative character. I believe she will be an outstanding Secretary of the Air Force, which is why I strongly encourage my colleagues to confirm her without delay.

Confirming Dr. Wilson with dispatch is necessary to address the many challenges currently facing our military. After all, there are fundamental issues regarding the readiness of our armed services—especially the Air Force—which must be confronted and resolved.

Although the lack of proper investment and training is evident in each of the military departments, I am especially concerned about the Air Force because of its unique missions and responsibilities. Two words describe each set of problems facing our Air Force: "too few"—too few aircraft; too few personnel, including pilots; too few flight training hours.

Regarding the shortage of aircraft, as the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff recently testified before the SASC Readiness Subcommittee, less than 50 percent of the services' aircraft are ready to perform all of the combat missions to which they are assigned. The average age of the service's fighter aircraft is 27 years old. Many other aircraft, including the B-52 and the KC-135, have decades of wear and tear. Even more alarming, the aging aircraft of the 1950s and 1960s will be retained in the force for the foreseeable future.

The current number of 55 fighter squadrons falls short of the number needed to fulfill our warfighters' requirements. As Dr. Wilson testified during her confirmation hearing, "the Air Force is not fully ready to fight against a near-peer competitor," such as China or Russia—too few aircraft, indeed.

Of course, the number of aircraft is just one of the multiple issues facing the Air Force. We also have too few personnel, including pilots. Our aircraft—no matter how advanced—cannot fly without experienced and highly trained maintenance personnel, and we need 3,400 more before the service can effectively accomplish its mission.

We are also running short of the men and women who fly these aircraft. In

recent testimony before the Airland Subcommittee, senior Air Force officers testified that the service had a deficit of 1,555 pilots. Of that number, we require more than 750 additional fighter pilots. Further, there is concern that those pilots who remain are receiving very few flight training hours—much less than needed.

These are enormous challenges. But despite the Herculean task in front of us, I have no doubt Dr. Wilson will develop the strategies and policies required to restore our Air Force to a full state of readiness. I hope the Senate will speed the confirmation of Dr. Wilson to become the 24th Secretary of Air Force.

Madam President, I am very concerned with the way Neil Gorsuch has been treated. We could not have a finer person, a more ready person, a more knowledgeable person, a more legal expert-type of a person than Neil Gorsuch for this very, very important calling on the Supreme Court.

It is amazing to me how some of my colleagues on the other side have ignored all of the facts, all of the evidence, all of the experience, all of the goodness of this man. I hope they will not vote against him, but it looks to me as though many of them are going to vote against him. If you are voting against Neil Gorsuch, who can you support? Are you just going to support people who do your bidding? Or are you going to support people who really can do the Nation's bidding, do the things that this country needs?

Neil Gorsuch is that type of a person. He has that kind of an ability. He has that kind of experience. He is a terrific human being. Whether you agree with him or disagree with him, you walk away saying: "Well, he certainly makes a lot of good points." You walk away saying: I like that guy. He is somebody I can work with. He is somebody that really loves this country. He is somebody who sets an exemplary example in every way.

I have to say that, in my years of service here, I have seen a number of Supreme Court nominations, and I have seen a number of people put on the Court, and they have all been exceptional people. But there is none of them who exceeds Neil Gorsuch. He is that good. It is kind of a shame that we can't, in a bipartisan way, support this selection.

I suspect that there is more to it than Judge Gorsuch. I think our colleagues on the other side know that this early in President Trump's reign as President of the United States, he might very well have another one, two, or even three or four, nominees to the Court. I don't blame my colleagues on the other side for being concerned, because—let's face it—he is unlikely to put people on the Court with whom they agree.

On the other hand, he is very likely to put people on the Court who are

great lawyers, who have had great experience, who will bring great distinction to the Court, and who will, without telling us how they are going to vote and how they are going to rule, do the job that we all count on the Supreme Court doing.

The Supreme Court, to me, is a sacred institution. We have had great Justices on both sides—on all sides, as a matter of fact. We have had great Democrat Justices. We have had great Republican Justices. No one knows how great the nominee is going to be until that nominee actually serves on the Court and does the job that is so difficult to do as a member of the U.S. Supreme Court. I have every confidence Neil Gorsuch will be one of the all-time great Justices for that Court. He deserves confirmation. He deserves overwhelming confirmation. If we weren't in such a disputative mood around here, if we didn't have so much problems with each other, he would be an easy person to support.

So I hope we can put our politics aside and look at the man, look at his experience, look at his ability, look at his genius, look at his decency, and look at the fact that he agreed with his colleagues on 99 percent of the cases tried before the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals—and most of those colleagues were Democrats. Look at these types of things, and say: My gosh, what are we about here? Has it just become a politicized exercise every time we have a Supreme Court nomination, one way or the other?

I have to admit that it looked as though Hillary Clinton was going to win. Senator MCCONNELL decided that we should not put Merrick Garland on during a Presidential election, which I think was a good decision. It was a sincere decision. It looked as though, if Hillary Clinton was going to win, she might very well put a much more liberal judge on the Court than Merrick Garland. The fact of the matter is, Senator MCCONNELL knew the odds were against Republicans winning the Presidency this last election.

To some, it was kind of miraculous for Donald Trump to win. It wasn't miraculous to me, because last May Donald Trump called me and asked me to support him. I said: You don't want me. I said: I am the kiss of death.

He laughed and he said: What do you mean the kiss of death?

Well, I supported Jeb Bush, and he went down to defeat. Then I supported MARCO RUBIO, my colleague in the Senate, and he had to withdraw. So I am the kiss of death.

He said: I want you, anyway.

So I became one of two Senators who supported this now-President of the United States and was gratified to see him win that election. I thought he could. Deep down, I knew there was a great chance because I was going all over the country and I found that people were not willing to say whom they were for. I knew darn well they were for Trump. They just didn't want to

admit it—especially Democrats. But he got an overwhelming number of blue-collar Democrats—I understand them; I learned a trade as a young man—who voted for him.

When I say I learned a trade, I was born not with the wealth of some of our colleagues. I was born in what some people would call poverty today. We didn't think we were poverty-stricken. My parents were very solid, decent, honorable people, but they were poor—frankly, poor in the sense of monetary value. But they were good, honest, decent people, and I feel very blessed to have been raised by them.

All I can say is this. To allow the selection of the Supreme Court nominee to come down to a wide vote against that nominee with the qualities of Neil Gorsuch—if that is what my colleagues on the other side, in their wisdom, decide to do, I think it is a disgrace. I think it flies in the face of years and years of people selected for the Court. Now, we all can differ. Everybody has that right. All I can say is I just wish we were more together as a body.

I have great respect for my Democratic colleagues, as well as my Republican colleagues. This is the greatest deliberative body in the world. Despite our difficulties and our differences, we do a lot of really good things for this country. And we do it at its best in a bipartisan way when we can.

Madam President, 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.

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

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

SYRIA

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I would like to start briefly by mentioning the horrific chemical attack on innocent civilians in Syria earlier this week. It was nothing short of evil. I stand shoulder to shoulder with the administration in condemning this brutality. Again, we see Bashar al-Assad crossing a line—a line drawn and then ignored by the Obama administration.

The United States and the world community simply can't stand idly while Syria continues crimes against humanity, again, under Russian protection. That is why last night the administration responded quickly and proportionally. I commend the President and his national security team for acting decisively and sending a clear message to Assad and our allies. I am sure it was a message that was not missed by the leaders of the Iranian Government, the Russian Federation, and North Korea.

I agree with Ambassador Haley that Russia's obstructionism at the U.N. has enabled Assad and prevented international action, resulting in at least 400,000 Syrians dead in this civil war and millions of others displaced as ref-

ugees, not only internally but externally as well. Going forward, I stand ready to work with the President and his administration on a unified strategy to defeat Assad's barbarism and work toward greater stability in Syria and throughout the region.

Madam President, on another subject, as we all know, here in about 20 minutes, we will start the vote to confirm Neil Gorsuch as the next Justice of the Supreme Court. Over the last few weeks, our colleagues and I have—and the entire country, as a matter of fact—have gotten to know Judge Neil Gorsuch not only as a judge but as a man. He is a good man with superb qualifications and incredible integrity.

A Colorado native, Judge Gorsuch has served on the Denver-based Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals for about 10 years. He is known for his sharp intellect, his brilliant writing, and his faithful interpretation of the Constitution and laws passed by Congress. He is, in short, a distinguished jurist with an impeccable legal and academic record.

In addition to his decade on the bench, his professional experience includes years practicing in a private law firm, prestigious clerkships, including the Supreme Court of the United States under two separate Justices, and service in the Department of Justice.

It is simply undeniable that Judge Gorsuch is a qualified, high-caliber nominee. I have no doubt that he will serve our Nation well on the Supreme Court. But of course, in spite of all of this—his sterling background, his proven character, his broad bipartisan support—we have seen an unprecedented attack on this good judge and this good man in the form of a partisan political filibuster, the first ever lodged against a Supreme Court nominee. Yesterday, our Democratic colleagues would have prevented the up-or-down vote we are getting ready to have here starting at 11:30. For what? Well, it certainly was not because of the judge, his character, his qualifications, or his background and experience; it was merely because so many of our colleagues across the aisle simply have not gotten over the fact that Donald Trump won the Presidential election and Hillary Clinton did not.

Before Judge Gorsuch was nominated, the minority leader, our colleague Senator SCHUMER, said they needed a "mainstream nominee." After President Trump nominated a mainstream nominee, Democrats then looked for other ways to make him out to be some sort of extremist or radical. But they failed because there is simply no evidence to justify those kinds of characterizations.

For one, judicial experts spanning the political spectrum, including President Obama's former Solicitor General, voiced their support.

Second, they had to deal with the facts of his record. During his time on the Tenth Circuit, Judge Gorsuch was