

Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Rod J. Rosenstein, of Maryland, to be Deputy Attorney General.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, Jeff Flake, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, John Barrasso, Chuck Grassley, Mike Rounds, John Kennedy, John Thune, Pat Roberts, James E. Risch, Orrin G. Hatch, Shelley Moore Capito, Lindsey Graham, John Cornyn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Rod J. Rosenstein, of Maryland, to be Deputy Attorney General shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) would have voted "yea."

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 92, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 113 Ex.]

YEAS—92

Alexander	Gardner	Nelson
Baldwin	Graham	Paul
Barrasso	Grassley	Perdue
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blunt	Hatch	Portman
Boozman	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Heitkamp	Risch
Burr	Heller	Roberts
Cantwell	Hirono	Rounds
Capito	Hoeven	Rubio
Cardin	Inhofe	Sanders
Carper	Isakson	Sasse
Casey	Johnson	Schatz
Cassidy	Kaine	Schumer
Cochran	Kennedy	Scott
Collins	King	Shaheen
Coons	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Corker	Lankford	Strange
Cornyn	Leahy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Tester
Crapo	Manchin	Thune
Cruz	Markey	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Donnelly	McCaskill	Udall
Duckworth	McConnell	Van Hollen
Durbin	Menendez	Warner
Enzi	Merkley	Whitehouse
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wyden
Fischer	Murphy	Young
Franken	Murray	

NAYS—6

Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Harris
Booker	Gillibrand	Warren

NOT VOTING—2

Flake	Shelby
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 92, the nays are 6.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Rod J. Rosenstein, of Maryland, to be Deputy Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

CONFIRMATION OF SONNY PERDUE

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise tonight to speak briefly about our new Secretary of Agriculture, my first cousin Sonny Perdue. I grew up with this man. I probably know too much about him, but we won't go there tonight. He grew up on a farm. He became a doctor of veterinary medicine and served in the Air Force. He had an ag business for the past 40 years. He and I have been in business together. I have seen his integrity, and I have seen his responsibility all my life.

He is the first Republican Governor in over 135 years in our State in Georgia—just 15 years ago now, I guess. He served two terms. He created the Commission for a New Georgia, and he started an economic development focus in our State that has carried on for the last 15 years and has yielded the fact that our State today, by independent reports, is the best State in the country in which to do business.

Tonight, he has been confirmed as our next Secretary of Agriculture. I could not be more proud for him, for our family, and, most importantly, for our country. I want to be the first in this august body to call my cousin Sonny Perdue by his new title: Mr. Secretary.

I believe he is an outstanding candidate. I want to commend the President of the United States for his nomination. I think this is further evidence that this President, Donald J. Trump, is building an outstanding Cabinet with which to change the direction of our country, to get this economy going, to put America back to work again, to reengage internationally, and develop a fair and level playing field for the rest of the world economically.

As Secretary of Agriculture, my cousin has a big job, and he has a big responsibility. I look forward to working with him as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee to make our agricultural and farming and ranching industries vigorous and strong now and for future generations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I am grateful for this opportunity also to offer a few remarks on the confirmation of Governor Sonny Perdue as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. President Trump could not have nominated a more qualified individual to lead the USDA.

Today's vote is not only a huge win for agriculture and rural America, but it is a win for the American economy. This vote also represents the first time since the 1990s that a southerner has

become Secretary of USDA. For many Arkansans, agriculture is not just a rich part of our State's heritage; it is our livelihood.

Over the last few years, this livelihood has been threatened due to tough economic times in the farm economy. As I travel across the State of Arkansas, I see and hear about those challenges firsthand. In 2013, the farm economy accounted for a record high of \$120 billion. Three years later, the farm economy now has accounted for a record low of \$67 billion. This is a really hard time for the farm economy, and folks are really hurting in rural America.

Now more than ever, our farmers and ranchers need a champion. I believe Sonny Perdue is that champion. One of the ways we can help our farm economy is by opening new markets for American products. I was pleased that during his confirmation hearing, Governor Perdue expresses his support for working hard to open new markets to American agricultural products.

As a two-term Governor from Georgia with a background in agriculture and as a veterinarian, he understands the importance of the agriculture industry to our economy and the challenges our farmers and ranchers face in rural communities. I can think of no better person to lead the USDA during this challenging time. Governor Perdue's resume is impressive, and he is highly respected in the agriculture community.

Simply put, he has what it takes to get the job done. I congratulate Governor Perdue on his confirmation as Secretary of USDA. I thank my colleagues in the Senate for their support, and I look forward to working closely with him and his staff to address the needs of rural America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

OSCE

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I was saddened to learn that an American member of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was killed this past weekend by a landmine. Joseph Stone was carrying out his duties in territory controlled by Russian-backed separatists. Two other members of the team—one from the Czech Republic and another from Germany—were injured.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe controls these monitoring teams. They are comprised of unarmed civilians. The mission has been in the region since 2014, when, unfortunately, Russian-backed troops invaded Crimea. Had Russia lived up to the Minsk agreements and ceased supporting, directing, funding, and fueling separatists in this region, there would have been no need for the mission to continue.

Sadly, that is not the case. This particular special monitoring mission currently fields roughly 700 monitors, with 600 of them in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Those who are part of this mission are unarmed civilians. They serve as the eyes and ears for the world in the conflict zone. They report on the near-constant violations of the cease-fire, as well as reporting on humanitarian needs of the population.

They play an essential role in the understanding of the situation on the ground, often under extremely difficult circumstances and, certainly, as we have seen with Joseph Stone, dangerous circumstances. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I often hear from our top military leaders about the importance of the OSCE and the work being done by the special monitoring missions.

In late March, for example, during a hearing of the Armed Services Committee, GEN Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of the U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, called attention to the good work of OSCE in the region and the work of the monitoring missions. He confirmed in his testimony that "Russia is directing combined Russian-separatist forces to target civilian infrastructure and threaten and intimidate OSCE monitors in order to turn up the pressure on Ukraine." He also said, "Russian-led separatist forces continue to commit the majority of ceasefire violations despite attempts by the OSCE to broker a lasting ceasefire along the Line of Contact."

The tragic death of American Joseph Stone underscores the need for the OSCE monitors to have unfettered access across the front lines and across the border regions controlled by the separatists. This unfortunate tragedy is a result of this access not being granted.

I commend the Austrian Foreign Minister, who serves as OSCE chair-in-office, for calling attention to this tragedy and calling for an immediate investigation into these events. Those who are responsible for the death of Joseph Stone and the injury of the two other monitors should be held accountable.

Joseph Stone died serving his country by serving as a part of this international effort, and I extend my condolences this evening to his family and friends.

I once again call on the Russian leadership to put an end to the cycle of violence and to live up to its OSCE commitments. As chairman of the Helsinki Commission, the U.S. part of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I think it is important for Members of the Senate and for Americans to understand the important role that Americans are playing in this effort.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

RELEASE OF AYA HIJAZI

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, as a part of my office's "Expression NOT Oppression" initiative, I come to the floor today to highlight once again both a good news story with regard to human rights and a continuing challenge.

First let me begin by highlighting the good news. Aya Hijazi, whom I have spoken about before on the floor, is an American-Egyptian citizen whom Egyptian officials had imprisoned on trumped-up charges almost 3 years ago. She was released, and she was able to return home to the United States last week. I am pleased that she was set free, as are many of my colleagues in the Senate who had been calling for the Egyptian authorities to release her. I know this was a topic of conversation during Egyptian President ElSisi's visit to the United States 3 weeks ago.

I want to also take this moment to thank the Trump administration for working to ensure her freedom. They were instrumental—in fact, they were key in this being possible. They made it a priority in their private engagements with regard to President ElSisi.

Sadly, there are still many more political prisoners who remain jailed in Egypt. We here in Congress as well as the administration should continue to raise these issues with the Egyptian Government until all of them are released, regardless of their citizenship status.

As the leader of the free world, the United States must work to safeguard the freedoms and liberties of all people. We must speak frankly with our allies, with our partners around the world, and we must work with governments to improve their human rights records.

It is ultimately in America's national security interests to have stable democracies that observe the impartial rule of law and that respect the rights of their people.

CHECHNYA

Mr. President, I would like to highlight the horrific reports on the pro-Russian Chechen Government's brutal campaign against LGBT people and others over the last several weeks.

Human Rights Watch recently reported that "law enforcement and security agency officials under control of the ruthless head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, have rounded up dozens of men on suspicion of being gay, torturing and humiliating the victims."

There are reports that at least 100 men have been arrested. At least three men have reportedly been killed since the campaign began. Chechen LGBT individuals, as well as those suspected of being gay, have been taken to unofficial secret detention facilities where they have endured heinous abuses.

They also face the danger of so-called honor killings committed by their own relatives.

Instructive in that vein is a statement from a spokesman for the Chechen leader. Here is what he told the Russian news agency, talking about gay men, in particular, in the LGBT community: "If such people existed in Chechnya, law enforcement would not have to worry about them, as their own relatives would have sent them to where they could never return."

Unfortunately, this is not a new reality for those living under the brutal tyranny of the Chechen leader who, by the way, happens to be a loyal ally of Vladimir Putin. There have been reports in the past of similar abuses, although these reports seem to be the most brutal and should provoke anger in all of us.

We should never, ever tolerate human rights violations against any person for their political views, their religious beliefs, or their sexual orientation.

According to reports today, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said that Russian officials had not seen information to confirm the reports. Additionally, Putin's spokesman said: "We have no reason not to trust the head of the republic"—talking about the Chechen Republic—"until there are actual complaints in this regard, not abstract, anonymous but actual complaints."

Well, the actual complaints are all around us. They have been well documented in publications throughout the world, but instead, Vladimir Putin is choosing to prop up Kadyrov, the Chechen brutal dictator, and prop up his brutal regime instead of holding them accountable.

The United States and other responsible nations should do more to ensure that all people are protected and those who harm them are held responsible. We should use our voice on the global stage to call attention to these horrifying acts and to ensure that they are condemned in an appropriate way, ultimately in the hopes that they will be stopped.

TRIBUTE TO ALEX BURGOS

Mr. President, before I yield the floor, as a matter of privilege, I am joined by a long-time staffer of mine who, in about 20 minutes, will end his employment with our office.

Alex Burgos has worked for me since 2009, when he left a stable job with a stable paycheck to go work for an underdog candidate with no chance to win in the U.S. Senate race in Florida.

For the last 8 years, he has been a critical member of our team. We are proud that he has moved on and is going to be working in another place outside of government, where he will be quite successful. We have watched him grow both in his professional career as well as his family.

We are very proud of Alex because he is also from South Florida. He grew up in a household in the community where I grew up, in a story we are quite familiar with.

We are very grateful for the service he has provided to the State of Florida, to my office, to my campaign before that, and we are proud of what I know he will achieve in the months and years to come.

Given all the leadership he has provided our office over the years, I am grateful he had a chance to be on the floor with us for this speech.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.