

under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, an act to encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Thad Cochran, Orrin G. Hatch, Bill Cassidy, Tom Cotton, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Susan M. Collins, Lisa Murkowski, John Cornyn, Richard C. Shelby, Thom Tillis, Jerry Moran, Roger F. Wicker, Shelley Moore Capito.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 210

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 244, with an amendment numbered 210.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 211 TO AMENDMENT NO. 210

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 211 to amendment No. 210.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “1 day” and insert “2 days”.

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 212

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to refer the House message on H.R. 244 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 212.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] moves to refer the message to accompany H.R. 244 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment numbered 212.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

“This act shall be effective 3 days after enactment.”

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 213

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have an amendment to the instructions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 213 to the instructions of the motion to refer the message to accompany H.R. 244.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “3 days” and insert “4 days”.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 214 TO AMENDMENT NO. 213

Mr. MCCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. MCCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 214 to amendment No. 213.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike “4” and insert “5”.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the Omnibus appropriations bill is now pending. I filed cloture to ensure that the Senate can pass it and send it to the President for his signature before the end of the week. It is my hope that we can enter into an agreement to vote on the omnibus tomorrow rather than running out the clock into the weekend.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following leader remarks on Monday, May 8, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 38, the nomination of Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force. I further ask that there be 4 hours of debate on the nomination, equally divided in the usual form; and that following the use or yielding back

of time, the Senate vote on confirmation of the nomination; and that, if confirmed, the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO GARY RANSDELL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the retirement of my friend, Dr. Gary A. Ransdell, who, since September 12, 1997, has served as the ninth president of Western Kentucky University.

During his nearly two decades leading WKU, Gary has overseen a complete transformation of the school. An alumnus of the school himself, graduating in 1973 with a bachelor of arts degree in mass communications and again in 1974 with a master of public service degree in public administration, Gary said that “[s]erving my alma mater has been a dream come true.”

Under Gary’s leadership, the school has grown into a prominent university with an international presence. Since 1997, enrollment has increased from 14,500 to 21,000, with strong improvements in graduation numbers, the number of applicants, and student retention. WKU has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars in private donations, completing two major capital campaigns under Gary’s guidance. Those funds have revitalized the campus and created state of the art buildings and classrooms.

Students at WKU have a world of education within their reach. New undergraduate degree programs focusing on mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering and doctoral degree programs in education, nursing, physical therapy, and psychology promote research and prepare students for their careers. The university is also committed to transferring its technology into the Kentucky workplace to help develop the State’s economy. WKU’s regional campuses throughout Western Kentucky make education accessible to many Kentuckians for the first time. The creation of the Gatton Academy of Math and Science, which reached a milestone in 2014 when the school was ranked as the No. 1 high school in America for its 3rd year in a row by Newsweek, has helped Kentucky students blossom into scholars and future leaders.

During Gary’s time at WKU, the school successfully transitioned into Conference USA and, in the 2014–2015 school year, set a record with eight conference championships. The WKU

football program is nationally recognized and won two consecutive bowl games. The Hilltoppers—named because of the school's scenic location atop "the Hill"—are strong student-athletes both on the field and in the classroom, leading Conference USA in academic performance.

Gary is especially engaged in WKU's international outreach. He and his wife, Julie, herself a WKU alumna, have led students into new learning experience around the world in England, France, Italy, China, Ecuador, Iceland, Scandinavia, and Africa. The school is also home to Kentucky's first Confucius Institute and only Chinese language flagship program and has been recognized as a top producer of Fulbright scholars.

Gary has been at the center of each of these significant accomplishments. The growth in campus infrastructure, academic prestige, and community and alumni engagement at WKU have benefited Kentucky students and are in large part due to Gary's work. With his nearly 20 years of service, he is currently the longest serving university president in Kentucky.

I have enjoyed every opportunity to work with Gary over the years and support his vision for higher education in Kentucky. We have partnered together to secure Federal funding for worthwhile projects like WKU's mobile health unit and the agricultural research service Federal research lab. He is a dedicated public servant committed to student success. In addition to all of the work that Gary and I have collaborated on, I am proud to call him a friend. Along with the WKU community, I am sad to see Gary leave his alma mater at the end of this school year, but I am deeply grateful for his passion and leadership.

After a brief sabbatical, Gary will continue working to connect students with an international education. Starting next year, Gary and Julie begin their next adventure, as he becomes the president and CEO of Semester at Sea, a global study abroad program that uses a ship as a traveling campus around the world. I wish him the best of luck as he continues his passion for higher education in this next chapter, and I wish him and his family congratulations on a remarkably successful career at Western Kentucky University.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the votes on the motion to proceed and passage of a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor known as the State Automatic IRAs Rule, H.J. Res. 66.

On vote No. 119, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66.

On vote No. 120, had I been present, I would have voted nay on passage of H.J. Res. 66.

A few weeks ago, after their failed attempt to dismantle our Nation's healthcare system, Republicans launched a full-scaled attack on retirement savings by rolling back an important rule that would have allowed local governments, as well as small businesses, to expand access to a retirement savings plan. Rolling back that rule will make it nearly impossible for working-class families to save for retirement.

Today Republicans voted to roll back a similar rule that allows States, including Illinois, to provide access to a retirement savings account to millions of working American families. Their actions here today are misguided and will hurt, not help, many working class families.

We are facing a crisis. Tens of millions of Americans have very little savings for retirement. Half of households age 55 and older have little to no retirement savings, and some 55 million working Americans, including 1.5 million in Illinois, work for an employer that does not offer a retirement plan.

There was a time when Americans were able to depend on the proverbial "three-legged stool" to support them in their retirement: their pension, Social Security, and their personal savings. However, with the decline of pension plans and the inability of working-class Americans to personally save for retirement, that three-legged stool is now a pogo stick. Pensions once provided a promise of security in retirement, but they are becoming a thing of the past. Of those that remain, many are struggling to pay the benefits they promised, creating uncertainty and fear for those who have worked hard their entire lives.

Decades of stagnant wages, increasing income inequality, and job losses from the recession have made it difficult for workers to keep up with everyday costs such as housing and food, let alone save for retirement. Social Security is the only guaranteed source of retirement income most Americans have, and, sadly, this is nowhere near enough. Since there is no simple solution to addressing this crisis, we have to consider every option that will make saving for retirement easier.

In Illinois, 1.5 million workers do not have access to a retirement plan through their employer. These employees are more likely to earn less money and work for a smaller employer. To make it easier for employers to offer access to retirement savings plans and help workers save more easily, States began developing State-based individual retirement accounts or IRAs. My home State of Illinois, under the leadership of Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, led the way by being the first State in the Nation to create a State-based IRA called the Secure Choice Savings Program, making retirement a financially viable option for Illinois families.

The Secure Choice program allows Illinois businesses that do not offer a retirement plan and have been in business for 2 or more years to either offer their own retirement plan or automatically enroll their employees in the Secure Choice program. Contrary to the false narrative offered by Republicans that this imposes a burden on businesses, businesses in Illinois are largely supportive and the administrative burden is small. This program gives businesses the opportunity to help their employees save for retirement without being subject to additional Federal regulations under ERISA and without being subject to the costs that are preventing them from offering a retirement plan in the first place. Under the program, all employers have to do is share information about the program that is provided by the State with their employees. Employers do not have to find plans or investment vehicles, and employers make no investment decisions. These State programs provides businesses with a no-worries, low-cost way to enable retirement savings.

There are also claims that imply that States will manage these funds like their State pension assets or other State funds. This is simply not true. Funds under the Secure Choice program will not be comingled with other State funds. These funds, which are owned by the employee, will be managed by a private investment company, they will be separate from the State's budget and pension funds, and they cannot be used for any other purpose.

Once an employee is enrolled, 3 percent of their paycheck is automatically deducted and placed into an IRA. The employee has complete control over how the money is invested. The employee can take the plan with them should they change jobs and they may choose to opt out at any time.

The Department of Labor's rule under attack gives State and local governments' certainty to develop these programs that make it easier for employers to provide access to retirement savings plans. This rule has allowed the States to step in where the private market has failed. By voting to strike this rule, Republicans have created uncertainty for retirement savings programs that could help the 55 million Americans otherwise without access the means to secure their financial future.

In Illinois, the consequences are great as this will make it unnecessarily difficult for 1.5 million working-class Illinoisans to access one of the only viable means they may have to save for retirement. With the country facing a retirement savings crisis, the last thing we need to do is stymie States' efforts to explore innovative policy solutions.

These resolutions are just the latest chapter in Republicans' assault on working families. I am afraid this story will continue before there is a happy ending in sight. What we should be doing is working together to remove