

This week, 70 soldiers and 8 aircraft from Kentucky's own 101st Airborne Combat Aviation Brigade deployed from Fort Campbell to Puerto Rico to support hurricane relief operations. These soldiers will join the larger joint force effort, which includes elements of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, medical support teams, medevac aircraft, and elements from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Kentucky is similarly proud of the men and women of its Air and Army National Guard who have worked to provide relief in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, as well as in Texas where, according to recent reports, their efforts helped save more than 300 lives in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

We are all proud of their efforts, but we should not forget that disasters of these proportions typically require a response from nearly every arm of the Federal Government. The FAA plays a critical role as well.

As we all know, the FAA's authority to collect and spend money from the aviation trust fund is set to expire on September 30, this week. These are the resources that fund repairs and replacement parts for our air traffic control system. Even absent a crisis, it would be irresponsible to let this lapse.

We have read in recent days that air traffic in and out of Puerto Rico has already been limited because of damage done to radar, navigational aids, and other equipment. The Governor of Puerto Rico reports that air traffic control capacity is only at about 20 percent of normal.

This critical air safety equipment needs repair. The FAA reports that failure to act on the reauthorization would leave them without sufficient funding in the accounts necessary for replacement parts, equipment, and supplies. They would have only enough funding to cover salary costs for these workers for about 1 week.

These American territories are suffering. What they need right now is aid and assistance from the air, not a manufactured crisis from Washington on top of everything else. The House of Representatives will soon pass legislation that reauthorizes the FAA. It will help open up the air space to that aid so that it can get to where it is needed most.

The House bill goes further by authorizing tax relief for individuals and businesses affected by the recent hurricanes in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and Texas and Florida, as well, because these disaster victims should not suffer a tax bill on top of their losses. We need to pass that legislation here in the Senate without further delay.

NOMINATION OF AJIT PAI

Madam President, on another matter, the Senate is considering two qualified nominees today. One is the sitting Chairman of the FCC, Ajit Pai.

Chairman Pai has led a fascinating life, one punctuated by hard work and success. It had its beginnings in Buf-

falo. It traced a line through Canada. It unfolded in the small town of Parsons, KS, where Chairman Pai grew up with his parents, first-generation immigrants from Southern India. It was on to Harvard after that and then the University of Chicago for his law degree.

Pai's résumé prior to his appointment as a member of the FCC is as varied as it is impressive. He clerked for a Federal judge. He worked in the Justice Department's Antitrust and Legal Policy Divisions. He gained practical experience in the private sector. He served here in the Senate as committee staff. He even won a Marshall fellowship. He also worked in several positions within the FCC itself.

When President Obama nominated Pai to serve as an FCC Commissioner back in 2011, the Senate confirmed him by a voice vote.

When the Senate considers his nomination again today, I hope Senators will come together to give him strong support one more time. After all, it is no wonder why President Trump chose to elevate him to FCC Chairman earlier this year. He understands the communications industry from nearly every angle, considering his impressive resume. He understands the needs of rural communities in States like Kentucky, thanks to his own rural background. His dedication to bringing more openness and accountability to an agency that is too often known for secrecy is commendable. The same can be said of his advocacy for Americans' First Amendment rights.

I look forward to advancing and then confirming his nomination to a new term.

Madam President, one other nominee we are considering today is district judge Ralph Erickson of North Dakota, who is the nominee before us to fill a vacant seat on the Eighth Circuit. He is clearly qualified. He deeply respects the rule of law. He was confirmed by the Senate to his district judgeship by a voice vote. He enjoys the support of both of his home State Senators, Republican Senator HOEVEN and Democratic Senator HEITKAMP.

When his nomination came before the Judiciary Committee recently, every single member of the committee voted to approve him—every single Republican, every single Democrat. This includes the top Democrat, Senator FEINSTEIN, and the Democratic leadership's second-ranking officer, Senator DURBIN. So you would think his nomination would be as noncontroversial as it gets. You would be right.

Yet Democrats still chose to erect another pointless procedural hurdle before we can actually confirm him. We will probably do so overwhelmingly, given that the Senate just voted 95 to 1 on this pointless cloture motion—a pointless cloture motion on a nominee who nobody opposes.

Until now, our friends across the aisle have thrown up one unnecessary procedural hurdle after the next on even the most uncontroversial of nomi-

nees. As I have noted before, the opposition they have shown to these nominees most of the time seems to have little to do with the nominees themselves nor whether Democrats even support them. Our Democratic colleagues actually do support the nominees, just as they do now.

This really has to stop. It is time to end these silly games. It is time to confirm Judge Erickson, a dedicated jurist who is going to make a great addition to the Eighth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO MARY JO BROWN

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to honor a proud educator, a dedicated public servant, a beloved native of my home State of West Virginia, and my very dear friend, Mary Jo Brown. Words cannot express my gratitude for Mary Jo's service and friendship.

Since my days as Governor, Mary Jo has gone above and beyond to uphold the standards not only of professionalism, loyalty, and dedication but also of what it means to be born in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.

Mary Jo has always had a noble passion for education. She worked for Berkeley County Schools as a teacher, a library media specialist, director of public affairs, and finally as principal of Burke Street Elementary School, where we first became acquainted.

Upon her retirement from Berkeley County Schools, I invited Mary Jo to work with me as a regional coordinator, a role she kept through my entire time as Governor and now as U.S. Senator. Her warm personality and sense of humor truly have a way of making you feel at ease—laughing quite frequently at not only her but yourself.

I have heard many times from members of the Eastern Panhandle community that when she is out meeting with elected officials, business owners, and fellow West Virginians, she provides every confidence that their voices are being heard, and I can assure you, they are. She gets in contact with me immediately.

When Mary Jo is given a task, she doesn't take no for an answer. She is the most tenacious person I have ever met. She gives each project or challenge her all because it is for the good of her community, our State, and her hometown.

It would be difficult to find anyone as knowledgeable and dedicated to our home State as Mary Jo. Among her many contributions to the Eastern Panhandle, together with her loving husband Walter, was founding the Walter and Mary Jo Ziler Brown Fund in 2006 to help Eastern Panhandle students study animal husbandry, agriculture, and veterinary medicine.

We bonded over our passion for public service, inspiring the next generation of leaders, and we share the common goal of helping the rest of the country discover all that our great State of West Virginia has to offer.

Now that she is retiring after a long career of teaching, public service, and more than a decade of Federal service, I know that Mary Jo will carry the same passion for the Eastern Panhandle and for West Virginia that she always has, and she will continue to make a difference wherever she may be and wherever she goes—always for the State of West Virginia and her community.

It is my greatest honor to extend to her and to Walter my very best wishes in the days and years ahead.

Thank you, Mary Jo, and God bless you for everything you have done for me, for our office, and, most importantly, for our State of West Virginia and the Eastern Panhandle. God bless you.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I am honored to come to the floor today to express my support for the President's nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, Judge Ralph Erickson.

Judge Erickson is a longtime North Dakotan and has been a tremendous public servant in his current capacity as Federal district court judge in Fargo, ND. He has made our State proud, and I am confident he will be an excellent addition to the Eighth Circuit Court.

Judge Erickson has a distinguished legal career which spans over two decades. After working in private practice for 10 years, he served as a magistrate judge for Cass County and then as a State district judge for the East Central Judicial District Court. In 2003, Judge Erickson was nominated by President George W. Bush to the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota and was quickly confirmed by the Senate unanimously.

Throughout his tenure, Judge Erickson has demonstrated deep respect for the Constitution and the rule of law. His judicial experience ranges from overseeing routine civil cases to cases involving extreme criminal violence. Throughout all of these cases, Judge Erickson practiced a measured and prudential legal approach that is necessary for a position on the second highest court in the United States.

Judge Erickson has also proved to be a champion for Indian Country. He serves as the Chair of the Tribal Issues Advisory Group on the United States Sentencing Commission, where he works to preserve Tribal sovereignty. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I believe Judge Erickson's expertise on this issue will be a valuable asset to the Eighth Circuit Court.

Madam President, part of our duty as Senators is to evaluate the qualifica-

tions of the President's appointees and to vote on their nominations accordingly. This is a responsibility that I take very seriously, and I have no doubt that if confirmed, Judge Erickson will be an excellent circuit judge. I am honored to be here to support his nomination and to urge my colleagues to vote yes.

I would also like to note that in the Gallery today we have his daughter Elizabeth joining us. I think it is wonderful that she could be here to see her father's confirmation vote. She is a sophomore at Catholic University and just an outstanding young person, and there is no doubt that she is extremely proud of her father today. So it is wonderful to welcome her here for this momentous occasion.

With that, Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Under the previous order, all time having expired, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Erickson nomination?

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. STRANGE), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 207 Ex.]

YEAS—95

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

NAYS—1

Warren

NOT VOTING—4

Cochran
Menendez
Strange
Tillis

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.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Pai nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ajit Varadaraj Pai, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of five years from July 1, 2016.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 1:45 p.m. will be equally divided.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I want to speak on the renomination of Ajit Pai to serve as Chairman of the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, to serve for a term of 5 years.

Under the previous administration, the FCC always had the consumers' back. Back then, that administration's FCC strengthened consumer protections. It furthered competition, it protected public safety, and it pushed forward to ensure universal service for all Americans.

Ultimately, the success or failure of the FCC rises and rests not on the fulfillment of special interest wish lists but on the treatment of those who are least able to protect themselves and whether their First Amendment rights, including those of journalists, are vigorously protected.

Chairman Pai has been a vocal and excessively partisan and often hostile opponent of pro-consumer steps taken by his colleagues on the FCC. We have seen that time after time in the previous administration.

Since becoming Chairman of the FCC this year, he has systematically undercut much of the work done over the past 8 years. I want to give you several examples.

He has acted to prevent millions of broadband subscribers from receiving key information about rates, terms, and conditions of their service. This is called disclosure. He has threatened the expansion of broadband into the homes of low-income Americans by limiting the effectiveness of the new Lifeline Program reforms. If that is not enough, he has proposed sweeping limits on the ability of States and localities to review and improve the installation of certain types of wireless equipment. Furthermore, he has supported the moves by the GOP Congress to eliminate commonsense privacy rules for broadband services.

If all of that is not enough, he has eliminated several media ownership