

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gallaudet, Elliott, and Copan nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 360.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Bruce J. Walker, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability).

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Walker nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and 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.

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, over 2 weeks ago, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands were devastated by Hurricane Maria. This was less than a month after the islands felt the impacts of another powerful storm, Hurricane Irma. Hurricane Maria has left a wake of destruction across the islands. In Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, too many Americans remain without power, clean drinking water, or a method of communicating with their relatives and first responders.

Last week, I met with leaders in the Puerto Rican community in Chicago to discuss local efforts to provide aid.

This week, I met with a delegation from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to discuss relief efforts and what we can do at the Federal level to help them rebuild. The stories they shared about friends and family in Puerto Rico were heartbreaking. These people, our fellow American citizens, are facing a life and death situation. Sadly, the lives of at least 16 people have been claimed.

The situation in Puerto Rico is dire, and aid cannot wait. The 3.5 million people who live on the island of Puerto Rico are our fellow U.S. citizens, and it is our duty to provide aid to them in their time of need.

Yesterday, Congress received a supplemental aid request from the administration to provide much needed disaster relief to our fellow Americans. Now, Congress must come together to help these Americans rebuild homes and businesses, restore critical infrastructure, and access life-sustaining supplies.

Providing emergency disaster assistance to people in need is not a local issue. It is an American issue.

Just as I expect my colleagues to come to the aid of the State of Illinois when we are faced with a natural disaster and just as Congress came to the aid of Hurricane Harvey victims a few short weeks ago, the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands expect us to rally behind them as they work to respond to Hurricane Maria.

I urge my colleagues to quickly pass a clean aid package that will help all Americans whose lives have been impacted by these natural disasters. Any supplemental appropriations bill that includes aid for States impacted by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma must also include aid for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and western States that have been devastated by wildfires.

I was heartened to hear that the Illinois National Guard has deployed teams to provide telecommunication assistance, food, water, tents, and cots to Puerto Rico. I was also glad to see that individual assistance is now available for all 78 of the municipalities on the island, ensuring all individuals in Puerto Rico can receive assistance from the Federal Government.

The Federal response to this disaster has taken far too long, and we must do more to help our fellow American citizens during this humanitarian crisis.

In Congress, our top priority should be making sure the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have the funding they need to rebuild and recover. We cannot delay providing this much needed funding any longer.

It has been tragic to see thousands of shipping containers held at ports, which have been full of critical, life-sustaining supplies that are not reaching those most in need. There continue to be reports of families in Puerto Rico who are stranded and isolated. We must prioritize quickly distributing supplies to reach every individual in the days, weeks, and months to come.

The U.S. citizens who live in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are at risk of running out of food, water, and fuel. It would be unconscionable for us to abandon them in their time of need.

Our thoughts are with the many people who have lost their loved ones, their homes, and other property. I want to recognize the hard work of the volunteers, local officials, and Federal employees that have come forward in this time of need and pitched in at every level.

We can and should do more to help the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands rebuild and recover. I have no doubt that the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will be able to clean up and rebuild, and they will be stronger for it. The entire Nation must come together as an American family to give them the aid and support they need at every step along the way.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there are a lot of issues roiling our Nation these days. I want to talk about an issue that may not get all the headlines, but that has seen dramatic and troubling changes this year: our Nation's higher education policy.

Over the last several weeks, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has continued her assault on students and their families.

Previously we had seen her rescind reforms that would improve customer service for students and hold student loan servicers accountable for their treatment of borrowers; rescind a policy prohibiting debt collectors from charging borrowers 16 percent fees to bring their loans out of default; halt the processing of borrower defense loan discharge applications from students defrauded by for-profit colleges and throwing out rules intended to help students get the discharges to which they are entitled to under law; rewrite the gainful employment rule, which is meant to protect students from programs for-profit colleges that saddle students with too much debt compared to their income; propose eliminating public service loan forgiveness, which helps students afford to serve their communities, States, and country while repaying their student loans; propose dumping \$38 billion in additional student loan interest on needy students by eliminating subsidized undergraduate loans; and propose freezing the maximum Pell grant award so that their award covers even less of what it costs a student to attend college.

That is just the beginning.

Several weeks ago, I joined Senators BROWN, MURRAY, and WARREN in calling on Secretary DeVos to appoint a credible, well-qualified, independent chief enforcement officer to lead the Department of Education's enforcement unit.

The unit was created after the collapse of Corinthian to improve oversight of higher education institutions and enforcement of Federal laws.

Robert Kaye, a respected investigator and consumer expert from the Federal Trade Commission, was selected to be the first chief. Kaye left the post in March.

Secretary DeVos allowed this critical position to remain vacant for more than 4 months until earlier last month, when she finally announced the appointment of Dr. Julian Schmoke, Jr.

At first glance, Dr. Schmoke meets none of the requirements for the job that my colleagues and I set out in our letter.

As chief enforcement officer, Dr. Schmoke will be charged with ensuring that institutions of higher education are following Federal laws and regulations.

This will mean paying special attention to an area that poses the most risk to students and has demonstrated systemic abuse: for-profit colleges.

These are the colleges that enroll 9 percent of all postsecondary students in America, but take in 17 percent of all Federal student aid and account for 33 percent of all Federal student loan defaults.

Beyond the infamous Corinthian and ITT Tech examples, there are countless examples of for-profit colleges defrauding students, whether it be Ashford, Westwood, or DeVry.

Last year, DeVry agreed to pay the Federal Trade Commission \$100 million for defrauding students and agreed to a separate settlement with the Department of Education.

Guess who Dr. Schmoke previously worked for? You guessed it, DeVry University.

In fact, there are reports that DeVry is still under investigation by the very unit Dr. Schmoke has been appointed to lead. How is that for the fox guarding the henhouse?

If that wasn't enough, there is no discernable evidence on Dr. Schmoke's resume of any experience conducting or overseeing investigations.

Shortly after his appointment, I joined Senators BROWN, WARREN, BLUMENTHAL, and WHITEHOUSE in writing to Dr. Schmoke raising these concerns and asking him to meet with us. We are still waiting.

As Betsy DeVos orchestrates a corporate takeover of the Department of Education by for-profit interests, State attorneys general and other Federal agencies are even more important in providing aggressive oversight to protect students and taxpayers.

Betsy DeVos is doing what she can to disrupt that, too.

On September 1, the Department of Education provided notice to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that it was terminating its existing data-sharing agreement with the CFPB.

The Department took exception “to the CFPB unilaterally expanding its

oversight role . . .” into areas that the Department viewed as within its jurisdiction.

The CFPB has been a leader in protecting student borrowers harmed by Federal loan servicers like Navient and predatory lending practices by institutions like Corinthian and ITT Tech.

This political stunt makes clear that Secretary DeVos would rather initiate a turf war than work with other Federal agencies to fulfill the Federal Government's collective oversight responsibilities.

In announcing Dr. Schmoke as the new chief enforcement officer, Secretary DeVos said, “Protecting students has always been my top priority.”

Well, Madam Secretary, your actions just don't back up that statement.

Nearly every time you have had the opportunity to stand up for students, their families, and taxpayers, you have turned your back on them.

Commonsense protections for students and taxpayers shouldn't be a partisan issue.

Secretary DeVos, I urge you to abandon this assault on students and instead work with us to strengthen America's system of higher education, to deal honestly with wrongdoing by for-profit colleges, and to increase opportunities for all Americans.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for today's vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 226, Callista L. Gingrich to be U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. I would have voted yea.●

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

CONFIRMATION OF ERIC HARGAN

• Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I had expected to be able to vote on the confirmation of Mr. Eric Hargan, to be Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Service, HHS. Instead, I am in Las Vegas to grieve with and assist my fellow Nevadans in the aftermath of the worst mass shooting in modern American history.

On the question of Mr. Hargan's nomination, I want to make my opposition to his confirmation clear. I do not believe Mr. Hargan to be qualified to be a leading member of HHS. This decision is based on his prior experience, his work and statements opposing the Affordable Care Act, as well as his statements regarding the extension of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan would be the highest ranking appointee at HHS, making him responsible for implementing and enforcing the Affordable Care Act, ACA, going forward. Considering the fact that the administration has repeatedly and consistently sought to undermine the ACA, I fear that someone with Mr. Hargan's views

will only aid and abet this reckless game the administration is playing with Americans' healthcare.

I hope that Mr. Hargan will surpass my expectations and serve this country well as Deputy Secretary at HHS. The role of HHS Deputy Secretary in implementing and administering the efforts of strengthening our healthcare system is too important for any other result. I believe strongly that Americans deserve affordable and accessible healthcare coverage, and I hope Mr. Hargan's actions as Deputy Director show that he agrees. However, I could not in good conscience vote to confirm someone about whom I have so many concerns. Thank you.●

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications which have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Arlington, VA.

Hon. BOB CORKER,
*Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 17-42, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Japan for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$113 million. After this letter is delivered to your office, we plan to issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale.

Sincerely,

CHARLES W. HOOPER,
*Lieutenant General, USA,
Director.*

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 17-42

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Japan.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:

Major Defense Equipment* \$108 million.

Other \$5 million.

Total \$113 million.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: