

here. These are all things we have in Alaskan space, but the thing that really makes us a great place to live is our people—strong, resilient, kind people all across our State who look out for each other, often in harsh weather conditions.

We are a patriotic State. I know everybody here claims that, and that is great. We all are.

Nowhere is the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism more apparent than in our veterans across the State. In Alaska, in Missouri—the Presiding Officer's State—we are all celebrating that, and we are going to celebrate that this weekend, going home for Veterans Day.

In Alaska, we like to talk about our veterans. We also like to talk about the fact that we have more veterans per capita than any other State in the country. So it is a very patriotic place—full of service.

In every city, village, and every community across Alaska, you will find proud veterans, many of them working tirelessly together to make sure they get the help and support that our veterans need. A lot of times that happens with the older vets—Vietnam-era vets. They come to make sure the new vets get the help they need.

To all of them: I salute your service and your sacrifice. Thank you so much for all you have done and continue to do for our country. Happy Veterans Day to all of Alaska's veterans. I can't wait to get home to celebrate in Fairbanks and Anchorage this weekend.

It is not just Veterans Day that is approaching in Alaska. This month we are also celebrating Alaska Native Heritage Month, where there is much to celebrate. Almost 20 percent of the population of our great State is Alaska Natives. This is a group of people who, generation after generation, have what I call a special patriotism.

What do I mean by that? Well, Alaska Natives serve at higher rates in the military—just like the lower 48. Native Americans have higher rates in the military than any other ethnic group in the country. This has been going on for generations—World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. When you think about it, it is special.

Let's face it. In the forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies, even sometimes, unfortunately, today, the Federal Government has not always treated Alaska Natives well. Yet, generation after generation, they go off to the front to fight for this country. It is truly a special kind of patriotism and a unique tribute to the Alaska Native heritage we are supporting and celebrating this month.

I thought it was fitting today to name as our Alaskan of the Week—to make it a collective tribute for all Alaska Natives who have served their country in the military, and it is thousands, to make them collectively the Alaskans of the Week as we look to celebrate Veterans Day.

Mr. President, here is a little bit of history. I know you know this, but a

lot of Americans don't. During World War II, Alaska was the only State in the Union to be invaded and occupied by the Japanese, so we had big military battles in the Aleutian Island chain of Alaska to throw off the invaders of our American territory. Thousands of Alaska Natives volunteered to protect their homeland and to defend their country overseas. Across the State, whether they were in the Alaska Territorial Guard, warriors overseas, code talkers who served with the Marines and others—they were as old as 80 and as young as 12.

This is a great story. It shows the warrior ethic. Alaska Native women, after the outbreak of World War II, originally enrolled in the Alaska Territorial Guard before they realized that women weren't allowed to enroll. In fact, the best sharpshooter in Alaska's Territorial Guard was a woman named Laura Beltz Wright of Haycock, AK.

Here is how the late, great Jerome Trigg—an Alaska Native and a marine—put it in 1968, at the height of the Vietnam war, when he was testifying in front of the U.S. Congress on a very important piece of legislation called the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. He was the president of the Arctic Native Brotherhood and, as I mentioned, a proud marine.

In front of a bunch of Senators, he stated as follows:

We have showed our patriotism as proudly as any Americans on earth. We have answered the call of duty with pride in serving [our country]. We answered the call in [World War] II 100 percent. Every man in every village—old and young—volunteered with the Alaska National Guard.

Remember, this was in 1968 that he was testifying. Then he said:

I have never heard of an Alaska Native burning the draft card or burning our nation's flag.

We are patriots. That service, as I mentioned, didn't end after World War II. Alaska Natives have served in every conflict—the Korean war and in droves during the Vietnam war.

I was honored to be in Southeast Alaska this past summer in a Native village called Hoonah. It is a beautiful place. There was a documentary I saw recently. It documented the classes in 1968 and 1969 in that small Native village in a film called "Hunting and War-time." It was about how almost every single male high school student in Hoonah—every one—went to go fight in Vietnam. That is incredible. It is special patriotism.

Let me tell you a quick, more up-to-date story. We had the Secretary of Interior, Ryan Zinke—a combat vet, a Navy SEAL, a heroic man himself—come to Alaska this summer. I asked him to meet with a bunch of Alaska Native veterans, particularly our Vietnam veterans, who had an issue that the Department of Interior has been working on for years. I wanted him to hear about it firsthand.

It was a very touching meeting. Some in the room talked about what it

was like to be in their villages—places they had never left—when they were 17 and 18 and 19. Then, a few days later, they were in a steamy jungle, thousands and thousands of miles away, in Vietnam. Some talked about what it was like coming back and not feeling that they had the support of their country, others talked about the difficulty of readjusting to life back in Alaska after their service in Vietnam and some of the discrimination they received when they came back home, but even though they went through this hardship, even though they went through some of these very difficult times in the late sixties and early seventies, not one of them said they had made a mistake in serving their country. They were proud, patriotic warriors, and to this day that is what they are.

Secretary Zinke said, after he left that meeting, he began it as their Secretary of Interior, and he left as a brother in arms.

I am so honored to be able to serve these great Alaskans and to celebrate them as our Alaskans of the Week, just like I know everybody in America is going to be proud to go home and celebrate with their veterans.

Once again, for our Alaska Native veterans, thank you for all you have done for our country, and thank you for being our Alaskans of the Week.

ENERGY

Mr. President, I just want to come down to the floor and say a few words about a debate that has been going on in the Congress right now, and that involves the importance of more energy for the United States.

We had a hearing last week on the possibility of opening a very small portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge called the 1002 area—you see it here in the picture—which would be a win-win-win for the United States. It would help create jobs, it would grow the economy, it would increase energy security, and it would also help protect the global environment and strengthen our Nation's national security. These are the two issues I want to touch on this afternoon.

We have the highest environmental standards regarding responsible resource development anywhere in the world. I was actually in charge of these standards as Alaska's commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. I could tell you, whether it was no impact exploration—what we call that in Alaska—or specific requirements relating to our incredible species, like polar bear or caribou or mandating the best available technology, we have an over 50-year record of responsible resource development in our State.

Let me just give you one example, what we call no impact exploration. On the North Slope of Alaska, we only allow for exploration activities during the winter months. So what does that mean? Companies actually create ice roads and ice pads, where they drive along the tundra with equipment and

with drill rigs to go explore all on ice. They do that for about 4 months during the winter, then they leave. When the spring comes, there is literally zero impact on the tundra—zero impact.

Yet some of my colleagues, particularly my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, have been coming down here for weeks talking about issues with regard to Alaska and the environment and energy. With all due respect, they are using talking points that are about 40 years old.

When we had the hearing recently, the ranking member of the ENR Committee said nothing has changed. Well, everything has changed—the technology, the high standards. The only thing that has not changed are some of the talking points the other side has been using for the last 40 years.

Let me just give you one example. On the bill the Energy and Natural Resources Committee recently put up with regard to exploration in the 1002 area—this is all of ANWR, I believe about the size of Wyoming. This is the wilderness area of ANWR. This is the 1002 area, the coastal area of ANWR that was set aside by Congress to look at the possibility of exploring a very resource-rich area of the country. This red dot—you can barely see it—is a surface area of 2,000 acres—2,000 acres. That is what the bill would say. It would limit development of this area to 2,000 acres.

For a little perspective, Dulles airport is 12,000 acres. This would be about 10 percent of Dulles airport. That is it. That is the surface footprint. Yet my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been coming out and talking about millions and millions of acres, so it is important that we push back.

Here is the big issue for those in Congress who want to continually shut down resource development in Alaska that they never acknowledge: When you disallow investment in Alaska, which has the highest standards in the world on the environment, you don't end up protecting the environment. You just drive capital investment, exploration, and development activities to jurisdictions in the world with little to no environmental protection—countries like Nigeria, Venezuela, Iran, Russia, many of which are our geopolitical foes.

In conclusion, what we are looking to do on the Senate floor with regard to producing more energy for this country is going to help with regard to jobs, it is going to help with regard to energy security, it is going to help with regard to national security, and, yes, it is going to help with regard to protecting the global environment because we have the highest standards in the world, and we do it right in Alaska.

If we are not doing it here, there will be activities in other countries, other jurisdictions where they don't care about the environment the way we do. So we need to move forward on this important element of the energy and natural resource bill that was introduced

today in the committee. I encourage all of my colleagues to support that bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I was listening carefully to the remarks of my friend from Alaska, and I am very much supportive of the effort to open up this small footprint in the Alaskan wilderness. It struck me that my friend from Alaska is right on point when he said the only talking points that haven't changed are the ones on the other side from 40 years ago. The advances in technology are truly impressive, and the opportunity not only for Alaska but for America to realize these natural resources is something very important to the country. I thank my friend for pointing that out.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 373, 374, 375, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 440, 441, 442, 459, and 460.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Robert M. Duncan, Jr., of Kentucky, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky for the term of four years; Charles E. Peeler, of Georgia, to be United States Attorney for the Middle District of Georgia for the term of four years; Bryan D. Schroder, of Alaska, to be United States Attorney for the District of Alaska for the term of four years; Scott C. Blader, of Wisconsin, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin for the term of four years; John R. Lausch, Jr., of Illinois, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois for the term of four years; J. Douglas Overbey, of Tennessee, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Tennessee for the term of four years; Mark A. Klaassen, of Wyoming, to be United States Attorney for the District of Wyoming for the term of four years; William C. Lamar, of Mississippi, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi for the term of four years; John F. Bash, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Texas for the term of four years; Erin Angela Nealy Cox, of Texas, to be United States Attorney for the Northern District of Texas for the term of four years; R. Andrew Murray, of North Carolina, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina for the term of four years; Matthew G. T. Martin, of North Carolina, to be United States Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina for the term of four years; and

Christina E. Nolan, of Vermont, to be United States Attorney for the District of Vermont for the term of four years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; 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 nominations 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 Duncan, Peeler, Schroder, Blader, Lausch, Overbey, Klaassen, Lamar, Bash, Nealy Cox, Murray, Martin, and Nolan 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. 412.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Peter Hoekstra, of Michigan, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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 Hoekstra nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.