

treat this as a political issue and a political pawn to be negotiated, probably not even this year but at some future date. By doing so, they leave these young people in a state of limbo and really subject to a great deal of legal uncertainty. For many of these young people, as they cycle out of the program—close to 1,000 a week—even if we come up with a legal solution, their ability to rejoin the program and reclaim their legal status may be extinguished. The truth is, this is not just another political leverage point.

Let me take a moment or two and talk about some of the folks who are affected in my State—folks in my State, folks whom I call real Virginians.

I think about one young student from Northern Virginia, whom I chose as my guest to the President's State of the Union Address a few years ago. I was so impressed with her work ethic and her passion for improving the lives of others that I asked her to serve after that as an intern in my office, where she did great work serving fellow Virginians.

I think about a law student I met recently in Williamsburg who was born in England and brought here when she was just 1 year old. Right now, it is getting close to the holidays. She is probably tucked away in some corner of the library studying for her law school exams. She told me she wanted to get that law degree to help fellow Virginians when she graduates. I say we shouldn't stand in her way.

I think again about a young man I met from Newport News whose mother brought him to the United States when he was just 6 years old. Sadly, his mother passed away before he graduated from high school, but I know when he walked across the stage of that graduation as valedictorian of his class, his mom would have been proud. Hopefully, if this program is renewed when he graduates from Virginia Tech next year with a degree in engineering, he will put those skills to work.

These are just a few examples about the smart, successful, young Virginians who also carry the categorization of being called Dreamers. The truth is, in Virginia, we have a vibrant and growing immigrant community that contributes to all facets of life in the Commonwealth.

While I talk today about Dreamers, I also want to make mention of another program that is caught up in some of these last-minute negotiations, the so-called TPS individuals—oftentimes individuals from El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and certain folks who have lived in this country for decades whose legal status is also in jeopardy.

The truth is, whether they are a Dreamer or someone who has been a beneficiary of the TPS Program, the truth is, immigrants in Virginia are all across our community. They are doctors, caretakers, small business owners, high-tech entrepreneurs. Quite honestly, they are also our next-door neighbors. They are motivated, tal-

ented individuals who want to help and continue contributing to the Commonwealth of Virginia and to our country.

What we tell them every day that we fail to act, every day that more and more of these young people fall out of eligibility, we tell them, in pretty direct ways, that actually even though they have served, studied, and worked here, that at least some in this Chamber don't really want them here. They would rather urge them to take their talents elsewhere.

As somebody who has been in business longer than I have been in politics, I can state that these young people are an enormous asset, and urging them to leave the Commonwealth or our country is a bad business decision.

As I said, unfortunately, with every day that passes, more and more Dreamers face the very real and terrifying prospect of being oftentimes sent to a country they barely know or may not know at all for an offense they were too young to even know they committed. That is just not right.

It is not right that their lives should hang in the balance as they wait and wait and wait for Congress to solve this problem—a problem that I know, if it were brought to the floor, would receive overwhelming bipartisan support. These young people can't wait any longer and shouldn't wait any longer. It is time to pass the Dream Act right now.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 430. I ask consent that there be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of time, 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 405 and 406.

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 Matthew Z. Leopold, of Florida, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and David Ross, of Wisconsin, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 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 Leopold and Ross 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 en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 499 and 500.

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 Scott W. Brady, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania for the term of four years; and Andrew E. Lelling, of Massachusetts, to be United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts for the term of four years.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 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 Brady and Lelling 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 Executive Calendar Nos. 548 through 551 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE COAST GUARD

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 271(d):

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Pat DeQuattro
Rear Adm. (lh) William G. Kelly
Rear Adm. (lh) John P. Nadeau
Rear Adm. (lh) Joanna M. Nunan
Rear Adm. (lh) David G. Throop

The following named officer for appointment to serve as the Director of the Coast Guard Reserve in the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 53(b):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Rear Adm. Andrew S. McKinley

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Coast Guard Reserve to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203(a):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. James M. Kelly

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Coast Guard to the grade indicated under title 14, U.S.C., section 271(e):

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Thomas Allan
Capt. Laura M. Dickey
Capt. Douglas M. Fears
Capt. John W. Mauger
Capt. Nathan A. Moore
Capt. Brian K. Penoyer
Capt. Matthew W. Sibley

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE COAST GUARD

PN1259 COAST GUARD nominations (10) beginning GEORGE BAMFORD, and ending TABITHA A. SCHIRO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1260 COAST GUARD nominations (71) beginning STEPHEN J. ADLER, and ending TORRENCE B. WILSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1261 COAST GUARD nominations (171) beginning LAWRENCE F. AHLIN, and ending RUSSELL R. ZUCKERMAN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 16, 2017.

PN1277 COAST GUARD nomination of Meghan K. Steinhaus, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 27, 2017.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

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.

NOMINATIONS OF STEVEN GRASZ, JAMES HO, AND DON WILLETT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week, Senate Republicans sought to confirm the 10th, 11th, and 12th circuit court nominees of the year. The Republican-controlled Senate has been moving at warp speed to try to confirm President Trump's circuit court nominees as quickly as possible. Twelve circuit court nominees is the same number of nominees confirmed in the first years of Presidents Obama, Bush, and Clinton combined.

In quickly rushing through President Trump's picks for these critical lifetime appointments, my Republican colleagues have been abandoning long-standing norms of due diligence and careful scrutiny. They want to rubberstamp these nominees despite a lack of complete information about the nominees' records and despite clear warning signs about the nominees' ideologies, temperaments and judgment.

Consider the nominees that came before us this week.

Eighth Circuit nominee Steven Grasz received a rare unanimous "not qualified" rating from the American Bar Association. Only 4 out of 1,755 nominees reviewed by the ABA since 1989 have received this rating. For those who are not aware, the ABA has worked since the Eisenhower administration to conduct a confidential peer review process for vetting judicial candidates. For their review of Mr. Grasz, the ABA conducted 207 interviews with his peers. These interviews revealed some very troubling things. People familiar with Mr. Grasz raised serious concerns about his objectivity, his gratuitously rude conduct, and his deeply held partisan loyalty. Those are major red flags for a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench.

After the ABA's review committee voted Mr. Grasz unanimously "not qualified" for the bench, rather than

reconsidering their support for the nominee, a number of my Republican colleagues decided to aggressively attack the ABA. One Senator described the ABA as "blatant partisans with a sad track record of hackery."

These criticisms are over the top. The ABA peer review and vetting process provides the Senate with valuable information to consider when we decide how to vote on nominees. President Obama took ABA ratings seriously enough that he did not nominate anyone who received a "not qualified" rating.

Of course, Senators do not have to vote on nominees solely based upon ABA ratings. For example, I voted in committee for Kansas District Court nominee Holly Teeter despite the "not qualified" rating that she was given by the ABA. I have voted against nominees who received "well qualified" ratings, such as Neil Gorsuch, because I had serious questions about their judgment and their objectivity.

It would be foolish for Senators to ignore the ABA's peer review process altogether. In Mr. Grasz's case, his ABA rating is just one of many troubling signs. Just look at some of the controversial things Mr. Grasz has said and written. He wrote in a law review article that courts can ignore jurisprudence that they consider to be "questionable." He wrote that the legacy of *Roe v. Wade* was "moral bankruptcy." He described the possibility of Nebraska recognizing same-sex marriages as a "grave danger." He falsely claimed that the term "sexual orientation" could include bigamy and pedophilia. He tried to amend the Omaha city charter because he was upset about a 2012 city ordinance protecting LGBT employees from workplace discrimination.

In Mr. Grasz's case, I share the ABA's unanimous view that he lacks the proper temperament and judgment to sit on the circuit court, and I am deeply concerned about his extreme views. That is why I opposed his nomination.

I also could not support the nomination of James Ho for the Fifth Circuit, for several reasons. First, I am very troubled by Mr. Ho's responses when I asked him whether waterboarding is torture and illegal under U.S. law. He said, "It has always been my understanding that Congress enacted legislation for the purpose of expressing its serious opposition to waterboarding as illegal under U.S. law." That is not an answer about what the law says; that is an evasion. Mr. Ho should have said, with no equivocation and no uncertainty, that waterboarding is illegal, that it is cruel, inhuman, and degrading and that it is torture. That is the law under the 2006 McCain Torture Amendment.

This is a critical issue for me. I am deeply troubled that we are, once again, seeing nominees come before the Senate, like Mr. Ho and Greg Katsas, who are tap dancing around this issue. We need to take a clear stand when it comes to waterboarding.