

Stabenow	Van Hollen	Whitehouse
Tester	Warner	Wyden
Udall	Warren	

NOT VOTING—3

Booker	Duckworth	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 47. The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of John F. Ring, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2022.

(Mr. HOEVEN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Washington.

EQUAL PAY DAY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today for two reasons. Before discussing the nomination at hand—John Ring for the National Labor Relations Board—I do want to take a couple of minutes to mark Equal Pay Day.

Today, it takes women more than 3 additional months to make what their male colleagues made in 2017. In the 21st century, there is absolutely no excuse for the reality that women are still being paid less than men for the same work. It is wrong, it is harmful, and it has to change.

What is even more unacceptable is that for women of color, the pay gap is even worse. African-American women, working full time, only make 63 cents for every dollar their White male colleagues make, and on average, Latinas earn 54 cents for every dollar their White male colleagues make.

The wage gap doesn't hurt just women; it hurts families and our economy. Women are actually the sole or cobreadwinner in two-thirds of families with children. Families increasingly rely on women's wages to help make ends meet—to buy groceries, pay the bills, or pay for childcare.

In order to help women and all working families get ahead, I am very proud to be a sponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act. The Paycheck Fairness Act provides transparency and support for women who are being paid less than their male colleagues. It protects women from retaliation for discussing salary information with their coworkers, it allows women to join together in class action lawsuits, and it prohibits employers from seeking salary history, so the cycle of pay discrimination cannot continue.

As President Trump now continues to roll back worker protections and prioritize corporate profits over working families' wages, I think it is time for Congress to act and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act because workers do deserve to be paid fairly, end of story, no matter their gender.

Mr. President, I want to turn to the nomination before the Senate today,

the nomination of John Ring for the National Labor Relations Board.

First, I have to object to the unprecedented nature in which we are jamming this nominee through.

It is standard practice that Board nominees are always confirmed in pairs—one Democrat and one Republican. We do this to keep the Board as fair and balanced as possible in hopes that workers have a fair hearing when corporations violate their rights or bargain in bad faith, because the Board is the only place to which workers can turn to enforce their rights under the National Labor Relations Act. Workers cannot sue in court. So I must ask, why is this nominee being forced through without also filling the Democratic seat that is about to be vacated, especially at a time when so many other nominees have been waiting significantly longer—some more than 6 months—to be confirmed? I have to believe that it is because special corporate interests are putting immense pressure on my colleagues across the aisle to confirm someone who will advocate for corporations, no matter the cost to workers.

Right now, the Board's credibility is damaged because another Trump-appointed Board member, William Emanuel, chose to cast aside his ethics pledge and commitment to me by participating in Board actions that would directly benefit his former employer. Because of those actions, Mr. Emanuel—the Board's independent watchdog—opened an investigation, and because there was a clear conflict of interest, the Board was forced to vacate the decision that overruled Obama-era worker protections.

With a cloud of ethics controversies surrounding the current Board members, it is clear to me why corporations and special interests are trying to get Mr. Ring confirmed so quickly. Mr. Ring has spent his career as a corporate lawyer representing the interests of companies, not workers. He has opposed the Board's reforms that stop companies from unnecessarily delaying union elections. He has encouraged the Board to undermine long-established rights, including the right for workers to have coworker representation in disciplinary interviews. I find it difficult to believe he will advocate now for workers, as this Board desperately needs to be doing.

This administration has spent more than a year undermining workers' rights and making it easier for corporations to take advantage of them, and the Board, under Republican control, has been leading that charge by ignoring longstanding practices in a rush to overturn precedents that protect workers.

At a time when corporations in this country and the richest among us are getting richer and working families are left behind, it is so critical today that the Board be independent and able to advocate for workers. Now is not the time to break precedent and vote on a nominee without the Democratic pair.

For all these reasons, I will be voting no on this nominee. I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. JOHNSON assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of Senator BROWN's remarks I be recognized for my remarks.

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

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, thank you.

I thank the Senator from Rhode Island, who has been a great advocate for moving this country forward on everything from campaign finance rules to labor, to justice, and to keeping our planet as clean as possible.

During his campaign, Candidate Trump made a lot of big promises to workers in Ohio and across the country. He told them he would put American workers first, but too often the people he has put in charge have a record of doing exactly the opposite. That is certainly true of the two nominees to the Department of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board whom we will consider this week, Patrick Pizzella and John Ring.

Think about this. They have spent their careers working to strip workers of their rights, defending corporations that are accused of mistreating workers, and trying to undermine collective bargaining rights.

Mr. Pizzella worked for disgraced former lobbyist and convicted felon, Jack Abramoff. They worked on the same lobbying team at the law firm of Preston Gates, trying to keep workers from being protected by Federal labor laws. These are the candidates the President of the United States, who talked about empowering workers and being on the side of workers, has nominated, one for the Department of Labor and one for the National Labor Relations Board. They have been busy through their professional careers—and very well paid doing it—trying to keep workers from being protected by Federal labor laws.

I know everyone is entitled to representation, but when you devote your life to keeping workers from having collective bargaining, keeping workers from working in a safe workplace, and defending companies who are accused of mistreating workers, it makes you wonder.

Mr. Pizzella also previously served at the Department of Labor, but his record there gives us no reason to rehire him at the Department of Labor. He worked at the Wage and Hour Division. He was supposed to look out for workers being cheated by their bosses out of the paychecks they had earned.

All over my State, from Cleveland to Cincinnati, from Ashtabula to Lima, from Marietta to Bryan and Toledo, I

hear stories of workers who simply couldn't fight back when their employers would occasionally cheat them out of a paycheck or overtime or misclassify them. We know most employers don't do that, but we know it happens with some regularity in communities all over my State and all over our country. That is why it is so important to have someone at the Department of Labor who looks out for the worker who doesn't often have a strong voice, as opposed to always siding with the employer on every issue.

Instead, an independent review by the Government Accountability Office found that when he was in his Department, the Wage and Hour Division was ineffective and actually discouraged workers from lodging complaints to get their hard-earned money back. So when a worker felt that he or she was cheated in the workplace, when Mr. Pizzella was in the Wage and Hour Division, those workers were reluctant to lodge complaints to get their money back because the Department of Labor was not on their side in those days.

This is the man who wants to be Deputy Secretary of Labor. He would be the second highest ranking official in charge of looking out for working men and women. His record indicates he would be more interested in looking out for corporations that want to take advantage of their workers. Isn't there enough of that in this country without the government siding with the richest, most privileged people in the country, the large corporations in the country against workers who simply don't have much of a voice? We are going to put government on the side of those corporations against those workers.

John Ring's nomination to the NLRB may be even worse. He has been nominated to be on the National Labor Relations Board. He is supposed to be a neutral arbiter between workers and management. He has spent his career representing employers. He has attacked the agency he is seeking to join. So much is at stake with this nomination. It will likely result in a 3-to-2 anti-worker and anti-labor majority on a board that has enormous influence over American workers. It will mean big advances in the decades-long campaign to chip away at workers' power in the workplace.

We need someone in both of these jobs—Mr. Pizzella at the Department of Labor and Mr. Ring at the NLRB—who wakes up every day thinking: How do I help American workers? How do I help American workers have a safer workplace? How do I help American workers get paid fairly? How do we make sure companies do the right thing as they treat their workers? That is what they should wake up every day thinking. Instead, President Trump has nominated and is hiring two people who have spent their careers trying to push those workers down. What these folks don't seem to understand is that it is not corporations that drive the economy; it is workers.

There is a problem in this institution. The leaders in this institution—the majority leader down the hall, Senator MCCONNELL—think you grow the economy from the top down. They think you give the richest people in the country tax cuts, you give the largest corporations in the country tax breaks, and it will trickle down and help workers.

No, that is not how you grow the economy. You grow the economy from the middle out. That is why we had greater job growth with President Obama after the auto rescue in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. More jobs were created in almost every one of those years than in 2017—President Trump's first year in office.

If work isn't valued, if corporations shortchange workers with the help of lawyers like Mr. Ring and Mr. Pizzella, then Americans can't earn their way to a better life for their families, no matter how hard they work.

In my hometown of Mansfield or where Connie and I live in Cleveland or in Cranston, RI—Senator WHITEHOUSE's hometown, where my daughter and son-in-law and two grandchildren live—how many times do I hear people in these communities say: You know, I am working harder than ever, and I have less to show for it.

President Trump is going to put two lawyers in key places in the Federal Government who are going to stack the deck even more against those workers. The last thing we need is more people serving in Washington who don't value work and who don't respect the Americans who do it.

I urge my colleagues to listen a little more to the Americans we serve. As President Lincoln said: Go out and get your public opinion bath. Listen to workers—not just employers, not just lawyers, not just to country clubs. Go to where workers hang out. Listen a little more to the workers we serve and a little less to big corporations, which it seems these days are trying to squeeze every last penny out of their workers.

Mr. President, reject these nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here on the floor for my 202nd "Time to Wake Up" speech. I would like to begin by thanking this body for the passing of the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund as part of the measure that Republicans and Democrats agreed to before the recent recess. The Presiding Officer obviously represents an extremely coastal State. I represent Rhode Island, a very coastal State. This new program will provide resources for the communities along our shores to be able to deal with the threats they are seeing from sea level rise, fisheries moving about, worsening offshore storms, tides that now come ashore on bright sunny days, and the various hazards that they must

undertake so that they are not left alone trying to address them.

I often use these speeches to explore why it is that we get nothing done in Congress on climate. I point out that the major reason is the insidious fossil-fuel-funded web of climate change denial, with a parallel lobbying and electioneering effort.

I point out that this network is funded by the fossil fuel industry in a deliberate and systematic effort to misdirect public discussion and to distort public understanding of climate change and climate science.

I point out that it is actually working. It has been so effective at infiltrating our political system that the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is a full-on fossil fuel flunky. I discuss the fossil fuel industry's parallel web that directs rivers of dark money into our political system and deploys related, but more clandestine, threats and promises to work the industry's will in Congress.

Like I said, it is working. The web of denial and political enforcement organizations has so far achieved its purpose: to prevent Congress from carrying out its responsibility to rein in carbon pollution. We are, as a result, failing to protect the American people and our economy from the effects of that pollution, particularly our coastal economies. But now agriculture and other economies are feeling it too, and Congress is still doing nothing.

So this secretive and insidious apparatus deserves our attention. Nowadays, this apparatus is dedicated to denying science, confusing the public, and holding a political whip hand over Congress on the issue of climate change. Nowadays, it does this to protect the fossil fuel industry from responsibility for its pollution. But it is actually not a new enterprise.

We have never seen this machinery operating at this scale before. It is bigger and more multifaceted than ever, but we have seen its tricks before. The science denial playbook, commissioned by the Koch brothers, ExxonMobil, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to stymie climate action, is the same doubt-mongering playbook we have seen used by Big Tobacco, by chemical industries, and by other corporate polluters for decades.

I am not the only one who has noticed. A lot of work has examined this denial apparatus—how it is funded, how it hides its funding, how it communicates, and how it propagates the denial message. This is valuable work because the better America understands the mechanisms of this deceitful operation, the better America can inoculate itself against that deceit.

So I have brought some of this work with me to the Senate floor today. It is kind of a beginner's bibliography of this apparatus.

I will start with a book called "Deceit and Denial," and, on the cover, described by Bill Moyers as "the best detective story I've read in years." This