

I urge my colleagues to put aside partisan politics. If this vote were on the merits, Representative BRIDENSTINE should be confirmed 100 to 0 on the merits. I urge my colleagues to come together so we can have a strong leader of NASA, an honorable war hero, and a leader who will lead space exploration going forward.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. President, I also rise to join Israel and the Jewish people to celebrate Israel Independence Day.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the modern State of Israel. On Friday, May 14, 1948, Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, brought together members of the Jewish People's Council in the Tel Aviv Museum. By then, the Zionist movement to rebirth the Jewish state had been at work for decades.

Ben-Gurion stood underneath a portrait of the pioneer of that movement, Theodor Herzl, and described the historic right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel.

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spirit, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

That writing had been recognized by the international community, he said, and declared the founding of the modern State of Israel. He also said:

We, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel to be known as the State of Israel.

Eleven minutes after Ben-Gurion made his declaration, and over the objection of many of his advisers and the State Department, President Harry S. Truman courageously recognized the State of Israel. I am sorry it took us a full 11 minutes to do so.

Meanwhile, armies from five Arab States declared war and invaded, in an attempt to destroy the new state. Despite being outgunned and outnumbered, Israel would prevail.

The Israeli victory might not have happened without heroic soldiers who had recently returned from World War II, including Jewish Americans volunteering to go and help. Some volunteers provided badly needed weapons, others offered military experience, and some fought.

In 1951, then serving as Israel's first Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion established Israel's Memorial Day, which takes place the day before Israel Independence Day and which commemo-

rates those killed in the wars and the terror campaigns waged against Israel.

From Tuesday to Wednesday evening, Israel came to a complete standstill in honor of the 23,646 Israelis who have fallen in wars, and the 3,134 terrorist victims since 1860. I stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel in commemoration.

It has been seven decades since Prime Minister Ben-Gurion made his historic declaration of independence and President Truman gave his historic recognition, and I am proud to say that America continues to stand unshakably with our allies.

On December 6, 2017, President Trump rightly recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and announced that the U.S. Embassy would be moving to Jerusalem, implementing the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 that was adopted overwhelmingly by Congress. I have long advocated and supported the United States to take these two actions which are required to rectify a historic injustice.

Jerusalem has been the eternal capital of the Jewish people for over 3,000 years and the capital of the Jewish state since its founding in 1948.

I recently introduced a resolution reaffirming the deep connection between the Jewish people and Jerusalem and denouncing efforts at UNESCO that have attempted to rewrite historic truth and to erase from history undeniable facts. I am also proud my home State of Texas adopted legislation on Israel Independence Day last year to combat the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, the BDS movement. On May 14, 2018, exactly seven decades since President Truman recognized Israel, the United States will finally and formally recognize as much and open our Embassy in Jerusalem.

I, along with many millions across our Nation and across the world, look forward to that day, and we stand in alliance and solidarity with the people of Israel, celebrating the great friendship, the great national security alliance between two great nations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING JOHN A. WILLIAMS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, the Senate is a great place. It is a great honor to be able to speak here, whether you are discussing your beliefs on an issue of major importance, honoring a friend, or, on rare occasions but all too often when you get to be my age, paying tribute to someone who has given so much and passed away.

Such happened in my State this past Monday, on the 16th of April, when John A. Williams died. He was 74 years old.

John Williams was a giant in every way in our State. He was a giant entrepreneur. He founded two great companies, one of them called Post Properties, the largest apartment REIT on the New York Stock Exchange. He started it in 1993 and built it to new heights.

Most recently, a few years ago, he started PAC, Preferred Apartment Communities, a REIT also, and he did the same with it—employing thousands of people, building thousands of units for housing in America.

He set the pace of housing in his career. I don't know how many people have noticed that in the suburbs of all major cities today, office parks and apartment complexes of any size are now some of the most beautifully landscaped places in the community. Thirty years ago, nobody planted a stick. Nobody planted a shrub. Nobody planted a flower.

John Williams became the largest importer of Holland bulbs in the United States of America. Every spring, tulips blossomed at Post Properties apartment buildings. In fact, he changed the advertising mode for apartments. Instead of calling them apartments, he called them apartment homes because he wanted his apartments and all the rental units to be looked upon by the people who lived there as their home. He sold that concept and built that concept and replicated it over and over, and it became the standard in Georgia. I have traveled the country, and it has become the standard all over the country in terms of apartment houses and landscaping for major commercial properties.

He was a great entrepreneur, building two great companies and helping thousands of other people in many other ways to build their companies.

He was a great father, a great husband, and a great family man. His wife Nancy is a wonderful "first lady" in our community. Parker, Sarah Brook, and Jay, his children, are all great contributors to our community. They all know how lucky they are to have had such a great father.

He was a great sportsman. When I say a great sportsman, I mean a great sportsman. He built Ranger, a replica of the 1937 America's Cup winner, one of the biggest yachts in the world, and sailed the world on that yacht and won races all around.

Also as a sportsman, he was a minority owner of the Atlanta Falcons. He invested with Arthur Blank in the Atlanta Falcons. They almost got to the Super Bowl—they got to the Super Bowl; they just couldn't finish the drill with the Patriots. One day we are going to figure out a way to do that, and I hope, in memory of John, we will be able to do it for him.

John was a community man. Who have you ever heard of in your lifetime who, in the same lifetime, was president of two different competing chambers of commerce, next door to each other? He was twice the president of

the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce. While running Post Properties and PAC communities, while doing all of the things he did with his family, while racing his boat and owning the Falcons, he built two great chambers of commerce and sought others to come to the communities where he was prospering and helped build their businesses. Then he became president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. The Atlanta and DeKalb County Chambers of Commerce are the one and two largest chambers in our State. Instead of fighting each other, he brought them together.

He was a builder, he was a giant, but also a broker of common interests. He found the good in every opportunity and tried to sell the good and forget about the bad. He tried to bring out the best in everybody. I never made a deal with John Williams or saw a deal that he had made—I never saw anybody leave the closing table who didn't feel good. His knack was to be sure that if you left the closing table and you had a check, you felt good about it, and if you had just written a check, you felt good about it. He wasn't a win-lose person, he was a win-win person, and that is why he was such a great businessman and such a great entrepreneur.

He was a great friend and a giant of a friend to me. I met him 50 years ago next month.

This may sound funny, but it is a great story. He worked for the Georgia Power Company, and I worked for a small real estate company called Northside Realty Associates. Our first two jobs—his with Georgia Power and mine with Northside—were to hold open the total electric house of the year in 1967. That meant that we drew the last straw, and every night, from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., we held the houses open in hopes that someone would come to look at them. The electric utilities hoped someone would build a totally electric house. It was a marketing tool. It was the first time they had ever done it, and we enjoyed doing it and I got to know John.

I remember the nights when John talked about what he wanted to be, how he wanted to build a company, how he wanted to be an entrepreneur, how he wanted to be a real estate developer, and how he wanted to make things better. We got to be good friends. In fact, I sold him a 4-acre piece of land where he built the house he lived in for years before he built the home he was in today. I participated with him in another real estate transaction he did and helped him with some of the properties he put together. I always found him to be a win-win guy.

He was my friend, he was my supporter, and he was my confidante. He was also my greatest critic. Every politician in America should be lucky enough to have a John Williams, because John will tell you what you want to hear, but he tells you what you don't want to hear. When you are on the wrong track, he will straighten you out.

Sure, he could write checks all day long. But the Presiding Officer and I know that it is not just the checks that they write. It is the advice they give, and it is the passions they have. When you find somebody who has a passion for their family, a passion for building businesses, a passion for their community, and a passion for everything that is good about America, you have found somebody you want to keep close to you. For 50 years, I stayed close to John Williams.

When I got the news about John Williams before I boarded a plane on Monday to come up here, I started crying—that is how close he was to me—but so did everybody else I ran into that day or have talked to on the phone since being back home. Everybody misses John and was shocked by his going. But realizing the troubles and the difficulties that he had had in recent years—back surgeries and things of that nature—and realizing, like all of us do at that age, when you are 74, which I am, that you know time is running out. You just don't know how fast it is running out. But it is a good example of how you always want to be ready whenever that day comes and know the legacy you left was a better legacy than the one you inherited.

John was a man of modest means at his birth. When he graduated from high school in the public schools of Georgia and went to the Georgia Institute of Technology—better known as Georgia Tech—he graduated with debt and a modest means but with great values and great principles.

The story about the flowers was all because of his mom, who wanted to landscape everything and make it look pretty and beautiful—proof that it didn't take a lot of money to make things look good; it took a lot of heart.

I am sad today, and all of Georgia is sad today, and they will be even sadder on Monday when we say good-bye to John Williams. But all of us should hope and all of us should pray that all of us have the time in our lives to know somebody as good, as decent, as honorable, and as compassionate for their community and as a lover of their country as John A. Williams of Atlanta, GA, my good friend.

God bless you, John, and God bless the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF JAMES BRIDENSTINE

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I am here to join Ranking Member NELSON and my colleagues to voice my opposition to JAMES BRIDENSTINE, who has been nominated to be the next Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

NASA is an agency that has been at the center of our Nation's modern history and impacts the daily lives of millions of Americans. The world watched in awe as Neil Armstrong took that first step onto the surface of the Moon in July of 1969, wearing a NASA patch

on his spacesuit. Today, we marvel at photos of Pluto's surface, captured by NASA's New Horizons mission in July of 2015. From the closest to the farthest reaches of our own solar system, NASA is always there.

NASA is at a critical point in its history, and that is because the United States is poised to unleash the next great feat of human innovation as we look to unlock the true possibilities of space. To accomplish these goals, we need a solid foundation, and that starts and ends with the science conducted at NASA every single day. NASA's mission involves not just revealing far-away worlds but investigating the realities of our own. In order to truly do that, we need continued scientific research of the highest caliber.

The scientists working at NASA today are among the very best in the world. NASA, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, produces and analyzes the most robust data we have on our planet's changing climate. The OCO-3 program monitors Earth's atmospheric carbon levels. The CLARREO Pathfinder mission measures Earth's atmospheric heat. The Deep Space Climate Observatory satellite provides our scientists comprehensive data sets that are crucial to understanding the vast changes that are underway on our own planet this very second.

On NASA's website right now, there is a web page entitled "Scientific Consensus: Earth's Climate is Warming." On this web page, based on NASA's vast collection of data, it continues, "The impacts of climate change are already occurring. Sea levels are rising, and snow and ice cover is decreasing. . . . The warming climate likely will cause more floods, droughts and heat waves. The heat waves may get hotter, and hurricanes may get stronger." Those are NASA's words, and we know them to be true because science has proved it.

NASA's science is the gold standard. Its scientific work is crucial to our understanding the threat that climate change poses to our Nation, our economy, and the health of all Americans and people around the world. But Houston, we have a problem. NASA's science, NASA's missions, and American leadership will all be in serious jeopardy if JAMES BRIDENSTINE is confirmed to be the next Administrator of NASA. Under his leadership, NASA would come to stand for "not accepting scientific advice."

Congressman BRIDENSTINE's record is one of questioning climate change and undermining science. He has repeatedly questioned the scientific consensus and the threats of climate change. Before changing his website, it stated: "Global warming theories should not drive national energy policy without clearer evidence." Global warming isn't theory; it is based on science. Unfortunately, Mr. BRIDENSTINE's words do not reflect the accepted science behind climate change, including the very