

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

science that NASA has been collecting and needs to continue to collect.

Under President Trump, we know that fear is rampant across the Federal Government among scientists. It is no surprise that the environmental and scientific communities across the country are asking that we vote down Congressman BRIDENSTINE's nomination based on his voting record and his clear denial of accepted science. If Mr. BRIDENSTINE is confirmed as the Administrator of NASA, he will bring that fear to its scientists at a time when we need them more than ever.

It is not only his views on science that make him unsuitable to lead NASA. NASA's workforce is comprised of more than 18,000 workers who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer. NASA has officially stated that "diversity and inclusion are integral to mission success." In a 2013 speech on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressman BRIDENSTINE declared: "Marriage exists to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife, to be a father and mother to children." He has stated repeatedly that he would support a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

Congressman BRIDENSTINE's personal views and voting record against people who identify as LGBTQ should immediately disqualify him from consideration for leading this diverse agency. NASA is an agency of inspiration, an agency that showcases the very best of American ideals: scientific integrity, innovation, diversity, fearlessness, resolve, and hope. Mr. BRIDENSTINE puts these ideals at risk and is not qualified to lead this agency.

I urge my colleagues to oppose his nomination. I urge a "no" vote.

I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### COMMEMORATING VAISAKHI

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to recognize and celebrate with my Sikh friends, my constituents, and friends from the Sikh community of Pennsylvania and beyond.

I start with the acknowledgment that my pronunciation of certain words may be off, and I hope I will be forgiven.

I am delighted to have so many wonderful representatives of the Sikh community here with us in Washington. I thank them. I thank Raj Singh and all of the members of the Sikh community of Pennsylvania who made this trip down to Washington, DC, to participate in a celebration for an important holi-

day and to raise awareness about the Sikh community.

Sikhism has been around for nearly 600 years and originated in the Punjab region of India in the 15th century. Today, there are about 30 million Sikhs who live in countries all around the world, making it one of the world's largest religions. Sikhism is rooted in the belief that every single person—every individual—regardless of race, gender, sex, or creed, is equal before God. Sikhism was introduced in the United States in the 19th century. Today, there are about 700,000 Sikhs who live in the United States, and a large number of Sikhs reside in Pennsylvania. In fact, there are several Sikh places of worship, known as gurdwaras, and they are located throughout Pennsylvania—in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Allentown, and Erie.

In my many travels across Pennsylvania, I have had an opportunity to meet with and get to know hard-working Sikh constituents. I can tell you they are close-knit, vibrant communities, deeply committed to their families—fully American while, at the same time, preserving some wonderful and often very old traditions. The Sikhs constitute a part of the rich, cultural fabric of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and I am grateful to them for what they add to my State.

A few years back, I was proud to join the American Sikh Congressional Caucus. As a member of this caucus, we honor and recognize the Sikh holiday of Vaisakhi. The holiday itself is usually celebrated on the first day of the month of Vaisakhi, which just occurred last week on Saturday, April 14. Vaisakhi is a special occasion for Sikhs to remember the founding in 1699 of the Khalsa Panth. The Khalsa were a fellowship of devout "saint-soldier" Sikhs who played an important role in shaping the religion's history and its identity.

The holiday also recognizes the spring harvest. Sikhs recognize this important holiday with parades, with dancing, with singing, and with other festivities, as well as with volunteer service, especially volunteering meals to those in need and other forms of community service.

This year, the Sikh Coordination Committee East Coast, with the support of the U.S. Congressional Sikh Caucus, has organized a parade in Washington on May 19 to commemorate Vaisakhi as National Sikh Day. The theme of the parade is the Sikh identity, the Sikh culture, the Sikh way of life, and thousands of Sikhs from all over the United States will be participating.

I am proud of the Sikh communities of Pennsylvania, and I wish the Sikh community much luck in the parade and a very joyous Vaisakhi.

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. ALEXANDER. 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 BARBARA BUSH

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, yesterday, our country lost a bright, caring, independent lady, and my wife, Honey, and I lost a good friend. Barbara Bush set a wonderful example as mom, wife, First Lady, and advocate for adult literacy. We express to the Bush family our sympathy and great respect for the life of Barbara Bush.

Jon Meacham wrote the biography of George H.W. Bush, Barbara Bush's husband, to great acclaim. He had access to the diaries of President Bush and Barbara Bush that was almost unparalleled in any Presidential biographer's experience. So it was a plain and unvarnished biography that told us a lot about those two individuals. I thought a better name for Jon Meacham's book—it was named "Destiny and Power," and it must have been properly named because it sold a lot—would be "The Last Gentleman." If I were to make a really accurate suggestion about the title for the book, I would call it "The Last Gentleman and His Lady" or maybe "The Last Gentleman and His Very Independent Lady" because Barbara Bush was a very independent lady.

I remember it was 1991. It was a sunny day, and we were walking on the south lawn of the White House. I was the Education Secretary, and I was walking with the President and Mrs. Bush to the announcement of his GI Bill for Kids, which was a school choice program for low-income children. As we walked along, Barbara Bush turned to President Bush and said, "George, you've got on the wrong pants." He had a suit coat on from one suit, and he had pants on from another suit. So she said to the President "You go on back in and change clothes, and Lamar and I will wait here for you," which we did and he did.

On another occasion, President Bush invited my wife and me to join Barbara and the President at Ford's theater. Of course, the President traveled with great security in a big car. As the protocol goes, he got out first, and as she was about to get out, she said, "I'll get the door, George."

On still another occasion, I was sitting next to Barbara and George Bush, and the President was called on to make some remarks. He leaned over to his wife and said, "Barbara, what should I talk about?" And she whispered very loudly, "About five minutes, George."

Barbara Bush was quite a woman. She said what she thought. When the second one of her sons decided to run for President, she was reported to have said, "We've had enough Bushes."

When I ran for President in 1999 against her other son, I made what I thought—certainly by today's standards—some very mild comments disagreeing about something, and I heard