

in awe as a SpaceX rocket flung a planet-hunting NASA satellite into orbit. Its mission complete, the rocket booster piloted itself back to Earth for reuse, landing nimbly on a drone ship floating out in the Atlantic Ocean.

Achievements such as these prove that Americans are still awed, still starstruck, by space exploration and all the opportunities it provides.

A new era of leaders can restore this sense of ambition in government. In the halls outside this Chamber, the Senate has a constant reminder of the importance of the space program. I refer to the commemorative mural this body commissioned in the wake of the Challenger disaster.

The mural depicts the crew looking expectantly, hopefully, off into the future. Behind them is the shuttle that carried them to Heaven, and the world is in their hands.

The Challenger Seven gave their lives in order to advance America's space program. They knew the risks—greater practically than those associated with any other profession on Earth or beyond it—but they also knew the mission was worth it because it contributed significantly to their Nation and to all mankind.

What will it say about us if we fail to carry on the mission they undertook, if instead of exploring the infinite frontier, we remain here below, passing the torch of exploration to some other power? I don't want to contemplate that future, and I don't want to believe the American people do either.

Claiming our right to a place in the stars will require an effort spanning many years and several Presidential administrations. We can begin that undertaking today by confirming a leader with a remarkable record of service to our country, a vision for the American space program that is big not small, and a genuine faith in his country that is as boundless as the heavens. That man is JIM BRIDENSTINE. Let's confirm him. Let's confirm him today.

I urge my colleagues to confirm JIM BRIDENSTINE without obstruction, without delay.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, thank you for acknowledging me and letting me speak on behalf of our nominee to be Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

I did not know Mike Pompeo well. As a matter of fact, I am not sure I ever met him until he was nominated. I just want to say to the people in this body, I don't think anybody would view me as an apologist in any way for the administration, and I view Mike Pompeo as a highly qualified nominee. I spent a lot of time with him privately and on the phone. He did, I thought, an excellent job in his hearing.

We have had a tradition of confirming people to important positions. Just to give a little history, John Kerry was confirmed as Secretary of State by Republicans and Democrats

by a vote of 94 to 3. Obviously, John Kerry, my friend, no doubt, had been involved in partisan activities. He ran for President. He is someone, no doubt, who I am sure has said things people did not agree with.

Secretary Clinton was confirmed as Secretary of State by a vote of 94 to 2—no doubt, the same case. I am sure she said things many Republicans disagreed with when she was a political person as a U.S. Senator running for President.

Condoleezza Rice was confirmed to be Secretary of State in a vote of 85 to 13, and Colin Powell was unanimously confirmed as Secretary of State. So we have had a history of the last Secretaries of State to be overwhelmingly confirmed.

I realize we are in an atmosphere now where that is just not going to be the case. I realize that my Democratic friends in many cases feel that in supporting Pompeo, it is a proxy for support of the Trump administration policies, which many of them abhor. I understand that. There will be a few Democrats who I believe will support him.

I want to say to people in this room, our President has very entrepreneurial tendencies. He talks to people on the phone late at night. He comes in in the morning sometimes with differing points of view than he had the day before. We had evidence of that recently on Syria, where one day, we are going to leave Syria, and the next day, General Mattis and others intervened, and thankfully we are going to stay there and complete the work we are doing against ISIS.

I would argue to people here that we need to have someone like Mike Pompeo, who serves the Nation so well.

This is a person, by the way, who graduated first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, in 1986. He served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also served with the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, in the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division. After leaving Active Duty, Mr. Pompeo graduated from Harvard Law School, having been editor of the Harvard Law Review.

Sometimes we meet people in life who are just sharper than we are, who have had an incredible academic background. I can't even imagine having accomplished some of the things he has accomplished in life.

I know the Presiding Officer served, thankfully. We appreciate that he served in our military. People who have served in the military typically have more respect for diplomacy than those who have not because they understand that their diplomatic effort, if successful, is the thing that keeps our men and women out of harm's way. They know that. Pompeo is committed to that. He was there at the Iron Curtain and understood what diplomacy did to free people and keep conflict from occurring. I know he is highly committed to that.

We have had cultural issues at the State Department, there is no question. I think everyone understands that. Our former Secretary of State is someone with whom I had a good relationship. No doubt there were some things that were left undone at the State Department. We have a lot of positions that are unfilled. All I can say is that I know our nominee is highly committed to promptly filling those positions. We have some culture issues there as a result. We do, there is no question. We know that. We acknowledge that.

As head of the CIA, every month Mike Pompeo sits down with CIA employees in a casual setting where they call him Mike, and they talk with him about what is going on. He is a person who knows how to build culture. He has done so at the CIA. He understands the importance of the professionals who have committed their lives—just like the Foreign Service officers at the State Department—to the CIA. So we have someone who I know is going to build culture. We have someone who I know is committed to diplomacy.

Let's talk about where we are in the world today. We have crises all over the world. We have issues with North Korea, Syria, Russia, concerns about some of the things China has done, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq. Who in the world can possibly know more currently about where we are than our Director of the CIA? I can't imagine there is a person in Washington who has more current knowledge about threats—the people involved in those threats, the people we can use to help us deal with those threats—than the Director of the CIA. There could be no one here more qualified or more knowledgeable to step in immediately and deal with the kinds of issues we have to deal with around the world.

Look at what has happened in North Korea just recently. We know that the back channels to North Korea have always been through intelligence. We understand that. He was exactly the right person to be there to talk and do the precursor work that needs to be done. Many others need to be involved—Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Defense; many other people, obviously—but Director Pompeo was exactly the right person to go and demonstrate his ability to be dealt with with respect.

I will be leaving this body in 8½ months. It has been the greatest privilege of my life to serve here. As I said to my Republican colleagues yesterday at lunch, I actually think the talent and the caliber of people here in the Senate have risen since I have been here. I think we have the best group of Senators today serving in the Senate that we have had since I have been here. I see a crop of people running for these seats, and I think it may even improve next time.

It pains me to know that my friends on the other side of the aisle know that this is a qualified person, this is a person who has demonstrated incredible

excellence in his life—he served his country. He has been in the private sector. He served in this body; he was a Congressman. Now he has distinguished himself with his service as Director of the CIA. By the way, in this position, I know many of my Democratic friends have lavished praise on him because of his transparency and honesty in dealing with them but also the way he has built an excellent culture there.

We will have a vote on Monday night in the committee. I hope we are able to send him out of committee and to the floor. I hope that the Members on the other side of the aisle who have not yet said how they are going to vote will think about the circumstances we are in today and feel that they can support a highly qualified Secretary of State because they know that having someone like him giving advice to the President, leading diplomacy, making sure the State Department, with the great professionals we have there, is given the ability to do what it does best by leveraging its efforts around the world—I hope that people will think about this and realize that we are much better as a nation having Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State than not having him as Secretary of State and will vote aye on the floor.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I rise today to talk with this body about the NASA Administrator.

Later today, we are going to have a vote that is extremely important for the future of NASA and the future of space exploration, what we are going to do with our satellites, what we are going to do on climate issues, and what we are going to do on weather. All of those are related to NASA.

JIM BRIDENSTINE, who is a friend and who is a fellow Oklahoman, the current Congressman from Tulsa, OK—Oklahoma's 1st District—is the person the President has tapped to say: That is the person I support to be the next NASA Administrator.

He has for months and months and months gone through the process. He has gone through committee hearings and has gotten all kinds of support. The committees he served on in the House of Representatives sent a bipartisan letter with wide majorities to the Senate saying: We have worked with JIM BRIDENSTINE. He is exceptionally knowledgeable about issues on space. He is a great choice.

They sent that letter over from the House to the Senate.

Multiple individuals have written letters in support of JIM BRIDENSTINE, including Sean O'Keefe, who is a former NASA Administrator. Buzz Aldrin also sent an extensive letter in support of JIM BRIDENSTINE and also wrote a pretty remarkable op-ed about JIM BRIDENSTINE, in support for him.

We have had multiple different groups that are space related who have

sent us all kinds of information and endorsements about JIM BRIDENSTINE leading NASA and being the next Administrator.

There has been a lot of support from around the country and from multiple individuals—former NASA Administrators, former astronauts, individuals who have risen up—but I still have people who bump into me and say: I don't know who he is. Well, I get that. He is a Congressman from Tulsa, OK. Let me give just a little bit of background so you will have some perspective on him.

JIM BRIDENSTINE began his naval career flying the E-2C Hawkeye off the USS *Abraham Lincoln*. As a naval aviator, he had 333 carrier-arrested landings. He has had 1,900 flight hours in total. While on Active Duty, he transitioned to the F/A-18 Hornet and flew at the Naval Strike. He flew for TOPGUN. He served in Afghanistan. He served in Iraq. He served in our drug interdiction work in Central and South America, flying there. He has had a pretty remarkable naval career.

He graduated from Rice University, which is no simple thing to do. He graduated with a triple major when he finished at Rice University. He has an MBA from Cornell University. He is extremely smart, and he is extremely engaged.

He has been very attentive to the issues of space. Serving in the House of Representatives, he has made his focus space and research and trying to realign NASA into being mission-focused. Some have said that NASA in some ways has lost its focus of what it exist for. JIM BRIDENSTINE has been very, very passionate in trying to get NASA back on focus with a big vision and a big mission. He has done that with multiple different bills that he has worked through, but he has also done that in trying to articulate to the space community why it is extremely important that we have a good, solid, and functioning NASA in all of its areas of operation.

He has the support of our delegation. He has the support of many in the space industry. He has the support of former NASA Administrators. He has the support of former astronauts. And he should have the support of this body today.

We will vote on him at 1:45. NASA's Acting Administrator is in the process of retiring right now. Not only should JIM be here, but we should not have taken this long to actually get to this spot. It has taken 8 months to get to a vote on a NASA Administrator. Let's get him on this task, and let's get him going. We need him in this spot, and I think he will do a fine job. That is not just my opinion; folks from all over the country have risen up and looked at him clearly and have said he is the right person for the job.

#### NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. President, I do want to make one additional statement as well. We are in the process of talking about the Secretary of State. It has been very inter-

esting that there has been all this debate about Mike Pompeo.

Mike Pompeo is a friend. He and I came to the House of Representatives together and served in the House beginning in 2011. I got to know him for who he really is.

I have been amazed at the smears in the press and the attacks on his personal character. Every time I read one of those, I think, this is a person who has never met Mike Pompeo.

The best way to evaluate Mike Pompeo is not just on his background—small things like graduating first in his class from West Point, his military service, his time in professional business, his time serving as a House Member, the excellent work he has done over the last year leading our CIA, the cool hand he has been in the middle of the chaos, trying to deal with all of the issues right now in Washington, DC—when you look at him, those are all good marks.

Quite frankly, one of the things I would want to come back to you and say is, meet him. For those of you in this body who doubt, who are willing to read a media story that has taken one thing he said at some point out of context, I would encourage you to meet him and actually have that conversation. You are going to find a fine leader who is dedicated to helping our Nation, who has done it on the battlefield, who has done it as a Representative, who has done it as the Director of the CIA, and who will do an incredible job helping us diplomatically and worldwide in the State Department.

I am looking forward to supporting his nomination—not because I am a Republican and it is a Republican nomination but because he is a quality individual who genuinely wants to help the country and who I think will uphold extremely well the history of diplomacy we have had in the United States.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me wholeheartedly agree with the Senator from Oklahoma on Mike Pompeo, as well as the comments he has made about JIM BRIDENSTINE.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

I would like to deviate just a little bit, though, and remind people that this is April 19, the anniversary of what could be characterized as the greatest domestic terrorist attack in history. It was in our State of Oklahoma at the Alfred P. Murrah office building, and 168 people were killed—many of those were very close personal friends of mine—and 850 others were wounded. I remember so well being there at the time.

Second Corinthians reminds us not to lose heart in times of struggle and tragedy. Instead, through our inherent strength and selflessness, Oklahomans united together to support our neighbors and rebuild our city—“Oklahoma Standard.”