

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

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today because of what is on our schedule for next week. Next week, the Senate will consider the nomination by the President for his Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

This is one of those times that I want to compliment the administration on a great pick. Mike Pompeo is a great leader. Mike, as a teenager, decided he wanted to go to West Point. Not only did he graduate from West Point, he graduated from West Point at the top of his class. He went into one of the least likely places, the Cavalry. He was a magnificent leader within the U.S. Army Cavalry.

He went on to Harvard Law School, and he earned his law degree, but he didn't stop there. He was invited to be part of the Harvard Law Review, which is a very special cadre of individuals.

He left and started an aerospace company, as many know—a very successful business. After that, because he believed community service was important, he ran for the U.S. House of Representatives, State of Kansas, where he served three terms with great distinction.

He was tapped, all of a sudden, to the Director of the CIA in one of the most challenging times to be involved in intelligence, much less to be the Director of the CIA.

By all accounts, those of us who serve on the Intelligence Committee and those people within the intelligence community but, more importantly, our partners around the world, after a very short period of time, have gained unbelievable respect for Mike Pompeo.

It is tough for me to believe that this is not a nomination we are passing like the last two Secretaries of State, John Kerry and Senator Hillary Clinton. The vote was 94 to 2 for both of them. I was here. I am pretty sure that I supported both of them, and it is not because I aligned with them politically. It is because I inherently believe that a President has the right to pick his nominees and for those nominees to serve, and short of something that is a disqualifier that the Senate finds in their background, the President should have the authority to have that person serve.

I just described to you the background of Mike Pompeo. Somebody is going to be hard-pressed to show me anything that is a disqualifier—other than politics. This institution has shown that politics never plays a part in nominations, whether we are in charge or whether the other side is in charge, regardless of who is at the White House.

This institution has been bogged down because nominations take weeks. We pass nobody under unanimous consent. Everybody is a challenge. It makes you wonder why people like Mike Pompeo would, in fact, go through the process to be confirmed.

Let me remind my colleagues, we just confirmed him for his post, so he has already been confirmed to serve in the administration in one of the most challenging jobs—the CIA Director. For some reason, people now find that he is not qualified to be Secretary of State. What could it be, other than politics, that comes into play?

I am here to attest to my colleagues that Mike Pompeo is a good man. He is a good husband. He is a good father. He has been a great leader. As a Member of the Senate with the charge of confirming nominees, I would say that this is the type of person we pray will be sent to us by the executive branch to confirm in a role.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—you may have differences with positions he has taken in the past, but for God's sake, do not question his qualifications to be a great leader. He has proved it. Do not question his background from a standpoint of education or his commitment to the country. He has passed the hardest tests in education, and, more importantly, he has passed the most important test of patriotism. He has served his country with distinction. My hope, my plea with my fellow colleagues is that they will allow Mike Pompeo to continue to serve his country, this time in the role of Secretary of State. I urge my colleagues to support him.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak for one minute.

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

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise today to recommend and urge my colleagues to vote for JIM BRIDENSTINE as Administrator of NASA. We will be voting on his nomination momentarily.

JIM BRIDENSTINE has incredible experience, an incredible resume, and an incredible understanding of the mission before NASA. We need somebody with a vision. We need somebody who actually has an idea of where we should take our great space mission—somebody who has commercial experience, somebody who has government experience, somebody who has management experience, and, yes, somebody who has experience within the industry itself, and that person is JIM BRIDENSTINE.

JIM has bipartisan support and support from the House. My fellow colleague, Democratic Congressman ED PERLMUTTER from Colorado, along with a dozen other Democratic Members from the House of Representatives, said that JIM BRIDENSTINE will be an excellent NASA Administrator. He has the understanding, background, capability, and, more importantly, the drive and desire to do an excellent and outstanding job at NASA. I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

You just heard our colleague RICHARD BURR talk about Director Pompeo's nomination as Secretary of State.

Blind bipartisanship cannot be the only reason that drives votes in this Chamber. Whether it is for the Secretary of State or the Director of NASA, I urge my colleagues to vote yes, put partisanship aside, and start moving these nominations and doing what is right for this country. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on JIM BRIDENSTINE.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bridenstine nomination?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 80 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Isakson	Shelby
Cotton	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Thune
Cruz	Lankford	Tillis
Daines	Lee	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Hassan	Peters
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Jones	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Harris	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

McCain

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 624.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, John Kennedy, Richard Burr, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, Patrick J. Toomey, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, James E. Risch.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

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

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

WELCOMING MAILE PEARL BOWLSBEY TO THE SENATE FLOOR

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, it was very exciting to have Maile Pearl with us on the floor just moments ago. It was certainly the first time I have seen a little baby on the floor of the Senate and may be a good symbol for the work the Senate will be doing in the future for the children of the United States of America.

Congratulations to Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH and her husband, Bryan Bowlsbey, for this miraculous addition to American citizenry. We are looking forward to seeing little Maile as she grows and prospers in all of the chapters of her life ahead.

ROHINGYA HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Mr. President, while accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, the great humani-

tarian and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: "Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."

As we look around the world today, there are far too many places where men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, but a place that really stands out is the nation of Burma.

The Rohingya people have endured unimaginable pain and suffering. Since August of last year, with assaults by the military and nearby groups in Burma, 350 villages have been burned; women and girls of all ages have been raped; and over 700,000 Rohingya have fled their nation for neighboring Bangladesh to escape this horrific assault. In just the first month of this crisis, Doctors Without Borders said well over 6,000 Rohingya were killed, including hundreds of children under the age of 5. One U.N. adviser on genocide prevention said: "The Rohingya have endured what no human beings should ever have to endure."

Now we are seeing the brutality of the Burmese military, followed by a deliberate strategy of isolation and starvation.

Several times in recent years, Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times has traveled to Burma to report on the Rohingya. Earlier this year, he entered the country on a tourist visa. He was warned by the Burmese Government not to do any reporting, but he did. He traveled to a total of five Rohingya villages and worked hard to be able to see these places to which everyone was banned from going.

Back in November, a group of five Members of Congress went to visit these same villages—two Senators and three House Members. We were told by the Government of Burma that we would be allowed to visit the villages, but at the very last moment, the government rescinded its invitation. Two months earlier, in September of last year, the leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, had said to the United Nations that Burma had nothing to hide and that the international community was welcome to come and see for themselves. So five Members of Congress went to see for themselves and for their constituents and to be able to report back to the entire Nation, but we were not allowed to see these camps, these villages, that had been burned.

Nicholas Kristof did succeed in going. Here is what he wrote:

What I found was a slow-motion genocide. The massacres and machete attacks of last August are over for now, but Rohingya remain confined in their villages—and to a huge concentration camp—and are systematically denied most education and medical care. So they die. No one counts the deaths accurately, but my sense is that the Myanmar Government kills more Rohingya by denying them health care and sometimes food than by wielding machetes or firing bullets.

Matthew Smith, from the human rights group Fortify Rights, said:

"These tactics are right out of the genocidares' playbook . . . underfeeding and systematically weakening a population has been characteristic of other genocides."

We in the congressional delegation were not allowed to go to those villages to see for ourselves. We were allowed to go to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, where the Rohingya live. In the capital, we were told we could visit Aung Mingalar. It is also called the Muslim Quarter. When I took this picture, I was standing in the Muslim Quarter, looking down the street. What you see is a police station at the end of the street and a barrier. This neighborhood is cut off from the rest of the capital.

If you think of the early stage of the Warsaw Ghetto, when people were not allowed to leave the neighborhood, that is what is happening right at this moment in the capital of Rakhine State in Sittwe. It is illegal for them to leave. In fact, the folks who live there have stores that have been locked up and shut for years because they are not allowed to leave this neighborhood and open their stores. There is a hospital right around the corner, and they are not allowed to go to it. Instead, they have to get safe passage to an internally displaced person's camp outside of Sittwe, get a referral slip, and come back to Sittwe to go to the hospital. There are incredibly difficult logistical challenges placed between this neighborhood and the hospital that is right next door.

This happens to be in the capital, where folks can stand along these fences and make trades for food, and they can receive on their smartphones international support. Yet imagine if you took this neighborhood and lifted it out of the city and placed it out in the countryside where there is no supporting community around the outside—maybe no cell service, so you can't receive money on your cell phone. There are 120,000 people who are living in these camps, IDP camps, in Rakhine State—120,000.

Then think of those folks who fled those 350 villages that were burned—who fled and saw their family members shot, their family members raped, their family members burned inside of the huts that were torched in those villages.

Nicholas Kristof writes: "The folks who remain are being subjected to slow-motion genocide through starvation and deprivation of medical resources."

This is beyond acceptable. That condition is a form of ethnic cleansing, a form of genocide, and the United States should be absolutely vigilant in leading the world to respond.

Those folks who fled to safety in Bangladesh are also continuing to experience extreme hardship. This is a picture from the hillside, which is where we were. There are still a few trees standing, but the trees have been coming down to provide firewood and