

Federal Judiciary awarded Mr. Duncan its highest rating of “well qualified.”

I urge every one of our colleagues to take his credentials, experience, and bipartisan support into account. Let's vote to advance the Duncan nomination this afternoon.

TAX REFORM

Mr. President, on another matter, in the last several weeks, we have focused on the contrast between the economic policies that my Democratic colleagues favor and the policies this Republican President and Republican Congress have put into effect.

Under nearly a decade of Democratic leadership, the American people saw slow and insufficient growth. For most workers in most industries, significant wage growth was nearly nonexistent; new opportunities were few and far between; and the new prosperity that was created was spread unevenly across the country.

Metropolitan areas with more than 1 million residents did OK under Democratic policies. Big cities captured nearly three-quarters of the limited job growth and more than 90 percent of population growth between 2010 and 2016. The rest of America fell further and further behind. Year after year, rural America, suburban America, smalltown America, and small cities across the country saw almost no progress. That is not a record to be proud of, and it is not one that Republicans would stand for. That is why we are implementing an inclusive opportunity agenda to get wages, opportunities, and prosperity growing again for all Americans.

We have cut job-killing redtape and passed historic tax relief for middle-class families, workers, and job creators. It is delivering results for Americans whom the Obama economy left behind. I hear frequently from workers and small business owners in my State about how lifting these burdens is changing their lives.

I recently heard from Senator GRASSLEY about the good things tax reform is doing in the State of Iowa. In Cushing, IA—population 220—the Anfinson Farm Store is using the new Tax Code to raise worker wages and give employees bonuses. Across the State, the 162 full-time manufacturing workers at Dyersville Die Cast are receiving their own tax reform bonuses. Iowa families will see lower heating and cooling bills, since tax reform is letting the State's utility companies deliver \$147 million in consumer savings. Iowans should be proud that both of their U.S. Senators voted for the historic reform that made all of this possible.

South of the border, in Missouri, it is a different story. There, too, tax reform is a big win for working families and small businesses. From big employers like Walmart to local businesses like Mid-Am Metal Forming, Missouri workers are reaping the benefits, but, unfortunately, only one of Missouri's Senators voted for it. The State's senior Senator voted on strict

party lines to block these historic tax cuts from reaching workers and families.

Maybe my Democratic colleagues still prefer the leftwing policy playbook that funnels jobs and prosperity into the biggest and richest cities but does very little for States like Missouri and Iowa. I am proud of Republicans who are taking things in a different direction, and all kinds of Americans are doing better because of it.

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

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

NATIONAL PARK WEEK

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today marks the start of National Park Week.

As a fifth-generation Montanan and as someone who grew up in Bozeman—in fact, Mom and Dad moved there in 1964, just a short drive from America's first national park, Yellowstone—I am very excited to take this opportunity to celebrate the parks that are so very special to so many because, in Montana, hiking, backpacking, fishing, and white water rafting are a way of life.

I grew up spending as much time outdoors as possible, and I continue that tradition with my children today. In fact, my idea of a great time in August is to take our dogs, as many of our kids as we can get together—according to their schedules anymore—and take our backpacks and spend several days together in enjoying Montana's outdoors. As a father, I am grateful to share these experiences with our four children and instill in them a love for the outdoors. Frankly, what better place to do that and enjoy the outdoors than in our national parks.

While Montana is privileged to have two world-famous national parks in Glacier and Yellowstone, national parks are the pride of so many States from Florida to Colorado, to Maine.

Speaking of Maine, I am very glad to have partnered with my colleague from Maine in leading this week, as well as with an additional 26 of our colleagues around the country, supporting this resolution. I am pleased we will have the opportunity to recognize the tremendous value our national parks bring to so many.

As this week begins, I have one challenge for everyone. I challenge you to find time in your schedules and visit a national park. Our national parks are what make us distinctly American. In fact, you can go to findyourpark.com and find the closest park to you. I hope to see all of you out there sometime this year.

With that, I would like to turn it over to my colleague and my friend, the former Governor of Maine and now the Senator of Maine, ANGUS KING, who

joins me in leading National Park Week.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I thank my distinguished colleague. I want to join with the chairman of the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Senator DAINES, to support this resolution which was adopted unanimously last week recognizing this week as National Park Week in this country.

When I left office as Governor of Maine in January of 2003, my family and I the next day took off in a 40-foot RV to see the country. My children were 12 and 9 at the time, and we basically circumnavigated America over the next 5½ months.

Just before coming to the floor, I went down the list of the parks we went to. The point I want to make is—and I get a bit emotional about this. This was the greatest experience of my life, to have taken my children to these parks with my wife, Mary; and to have seen and experienced them and experienced the people at the parks was just an unbelievable life-changing experience.

We went to Arches—I am doing them in alphabetical order, not geographically—Bad Lands; Big Bend in Texas, which, by the way, is one of the most beautiful places in the country and one of the least visited national parks; Bryce Canyon; Canyonlands; Capitol Reef; Carlsbad; the Grand Canyon—of course, every American should see the Grand Canyon. No picture, no movie, no helicopter movie, nothing can prepare you for the Grand Canyon; Mesa Verde; Olympic National Park in the State of Washington; the redwoods and sequoias in California; Shenandoah, just a few hours from here; St. John in the Virgin Islands; Yellowstone; Yosemite; and Zion. These are gems.

It has become commonplace to reference Ken Burns' statement that the national parks are “America's best idea,” starting with Yellowstone but spreading across the country. They mark our history, they mark our tremendous natural resources, and they are just pure inspiration.

I hope our colleagues can go, if only for 1 day. If you have 1 day, you can leave Washington and be in Front Royal, VA, in about an hour and a half and go down the Skyline Drive of Shenandoah National Park, one of the most beautiful places in the country and within a couple of hours of Washington. These parks are near every place. There are so many gorgeous and extraordinary places among this system.

In Maine, we have two—one is a national park and one is a national monument. We have Acadia National Park, which is the fifth most visited national park in the country, and it is enormously important. These parks are not only important to our spiritual well-being and the ability of our people

to enjoy the wonders of this country, but they are also economically important. Acadia, for example, has about 3.5 million visitors a year. To put that in perspective, Maine has a population of 1.3 million. So almost three times the population of Maine visits Acadia every year. The estimate is \$386 million of direct economic benefit to our State, with 4,200 jobs. It is a magnet. It is a national park that draws people into our State, and it is, indeed, one of the most spectacular places in America. I have been there many times. From the top of Cadillac Mountain to the place they call Thunder Hole, it is a gem of a place that is on the ocean. Acadia is on an island just off the coast of Maine. We just had a monument established about 3 years ago called Katahdin Woods and Waters, which is the other side of the coin in terms of attractive places that are important for visitors and are symbolic of the places all over the country. Katahdin Woods and Waters is inland. It is on a river. It has mountain views and forests, it is inland Maine, which represents so much of what our country looked like many years ago.

These places are deeply important to our country. I want to join my colleague in challenging all of our colleagues to visit the national parks. It is not only the physical nature, the physical attraction of a place like the Grand Canyon, but it is also about the people.

I will never forget taking our children to Kitty Hawk on that RV trip. We had a guide who knew everything there was to know about the Wright brothers, and he engaged our kids in a way I hadn't seen. This was education of the highest sort. The people in these parks are dedicated, they know their stuff, and they make the experience so dramatic and real for all the members of the family.

We have work to do in this body. We have a backlog of maintenance on our parks that the Senator from Montana and I are working on, along with Senators ALEXANDER, HEINRICH, and others, to try to find a solution to this maintenance backlog. We do have work to do. We are working with the parks to bring their admissions system into the 21st century in terms of online access for park passes. There is plenty of work to be done.

The underlying assets are so magnificent and are so important to our country economically, culturally, socially, and spiritually. I am proud to have joined my colleagues in sponsoring this resolution which was adopted unanimously. I join my colleague and invite all of my colleagues and all Americans to make it a point this year, as the weather gets warmer, to visit one of these magnificent places. You will be rewarded richly and the rewards will stay with you every day of your life.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

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. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, article II, section 2 of our Nation's founding document grants the Senate the prerogative to confirm the President's Cabinet nominees. One of those nominees—the current administration's most important nominee, at least today and this week—is Mike Pompeo, the current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Director Pompeo has been asked to become the Nation's chief diplomat, the Secretary of State, and now filling this post is entirely up to the Senate. The relevant questions couldn't be graver or more obvious.

Do we as a country, with so many longstanding relationships around the world, really feel the need for, the utter necessity of a Secretary of State or not? Do we believe in furthering international diplomacy by filling this post expeditiously or not? Do peace talks—for example, in North Korea—rank among our highest national priorities? Do we want to demonstrate as much by confirming Mr. Pompeo so that those talks can proceed, or is this Chamber too self-absorbed in partisan divides to see the much bigger, global picture?

It is time to be serious about Director Pompeo and what this nomination represents. The stakes are high, and the time is short. So why is it, then, that some of our colleagues, all of a sudden, seem to have suffered from sort of a situational amnesia?

Take this, for example. Our colleague from New Hampshire said last year that Mike Pompeo's nomination for CIA Director demonstrated his "strong condemnation of Russian aggression" and "gives [her] confidence" that he can step into this role and effectively lead the CIA. Now she seems to have forgotten those previous positive statements. Frankly, it is hard to reconcile what she is saying now about her vote on the nominee for Secretary of State and her vote on the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Now our friend from New Hampshire says she has deep concerns and cannot support Director Pompeo's nomination to the State Department. How is it that you support a nomination to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency—the leader of the intelligence community and an Agency so important to our national security interests—and then turn around and say you cannot support the nomination for Secretary of State of the same person whom you have just spoken so highly about?

Well, like I said, it is hard for me to reconcile the differences. Perhaps that would make sense if there were some

allegation that Director Pompeo had done a bad job leading the CIA, but no one thinks that. Indeed, we have learned—from leaks, unfortunately—that he traveled to meet with Kim Jong Un, the leader of North Korea, to lay the foundation for the talks that will now occur between Kim Jong Un and President Trump on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. I can't imagine a more urgent, a more dangerous, and a more necessary negotiation than the negotiation between President Trump and Kim Jong Un.

Having been in Seoul last September and seeing how close North and South Korea are, it is not just the nuclear weapons that could be put on intercontinental ballistic missiles that we have to be concerned about but the conventional weapons that are laid right there along the demilitarized zone that could literally cause enormous loss of life and bloodshed just across the border in South Korea.

So I applaud Director Pompeo going, at President Trump's request, on that clandestine mission to try to pave the way to denuclearize North Korea. If anything, my confidence in Director Pompeo's fitness to serve as Secretary of State is enhanced by his role as a diplomat, even during his current role as Director of the CIA.

Well, people are practically unanimous in their praise for Mike Pompeo's conduct as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. It is public knowledge that he has great rapport with the President. When you are representing the U.S. Government to foreign governments, the knowledge that the Secretary of State has a close working relationship with the President of the United States is the coin of the realm. That is why foreign leaders talk to the Secretary of State and take the Secretary of State seriously.

Mike Pompeo has earned the President's trust through his hard work and mastery of the intelligence work done at the CIA, and that has been the reason why the President now seeks to elevate him to the office of Secretary of State.

The objections of our colleague from New Hampshire, and by extension her party, are not about anything substantive. Nobody is pointing to something he did wrong or something they wish he would have done differently as a reason to vote no. They think Director Pompeo is too close to the President and asked whether and to what extent the Director will be able to exercise independent judgment. This is the chief diplomat of the United States, the chief representative of the President of the United States, and our colleagues are asking: How can he exercise independent judgment and separate himself from the person who appoints him and at whose pleasure he serves?

It just doesn't make any sense.

Our other colleague, the senior Senator from California, has come close to saying this very thing. She has said