

Scott
Shelby
Sullivan

Thune
Tillis
Toomey

Wicker
Young

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NAYS—47

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Booker
Brown
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Coons
Cortez Masto
Donnelly
Durbin
Feinstein
Gillibrand
Harris

Hassan
Heinrich
Heitkamp
Hirono
Jones
Kaine
King
Klobuchar
Leahy
Markey
McCaskill
Menendez
Merkley
Murphy
Murray
Nelson

Peters
Reed
Sanders
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Smith
Stabenow
Tester
Udall
Van Hollen
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Duckworth McCain Paul

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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. 788, Mike Pompeo.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Mike Pompeo, of Kansas, to be Secretary of State.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 bill 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 Mike Pompeo, of Kansas, to be Secretary of State.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, Todd Young, John Cornyn, Bill Cassidy, John Boozman, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, James Lankford, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, Tom Cotton, Mike Rounds, Roy Blunt, James M. Inhofe, Thom Tillis, Bob Corker.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 619, Richard Grenell.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Richard Grenell, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Germany.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 bill 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 Richard Grenell, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mitch McConnell, Cory Gardner, Orrin G. Hatch, Tom Cotton, James Lankford, Steve Daines, Roy Blunt, Mike Crapo, Johnny Isakson, John Thune, Thom Tillis, James M. Inhofe, Pat Roberts, Lindsey Graham, James E. Risch, John Hoeven, John Boozman.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the Dunkin nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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 bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I was reading a piece in the Wall Street Journal last week by Kevin Hassett, who was the Chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers. His piece made an important point that doesn't often come out as clearly as it

should, and that is that when American businesses benefit, American workers benefit. My friends on the other side of the aisle like to obfuscate that point.

Presumably they think they can gain political points by pitting businesses and workers against each other, as if benefits for businesses and benefits for workers were somehow diametrically opposed and as if, somehow, workers could thrive while businesses struggle.

As the piece I was reading pointed out, "In a modern competitive economy, workers do well when their employers do." If you think about it, it really is just common sense. The vast majority of working Americans work for businesses, whether they are self-employed, an employee of a small business, or an employee of a large corporation. For those employees to thrive, the businesses they are working for have to thrive as well.

Struggling businesses do not invest in workers; they can't. They don't hire new employees. They don't raise wages. They don't improve benefits.

On the other hand, thriving businesses do invest in their workers, they do hire new employees, they do raise wages, and they do improve benefits. Leaving aside the fact that most business owners want to invest in their workers, successful business owners have to invest in their workers if they want their businesses to keep thriving.

For starters, successful businesses tend to need new workers, and the way to attract new workers is with good wages, good opportunities, and good benefits. Once a successful business has good employees, it tends to want to keep them so that the business can keep prospering and thriving. How do businesses keep employees? The same way they attract them in the first place—with good wages, good opportunities, and good benefits.

As Mr. Hassett notes in the Wall Street Journal:

Research by economists Alan Krueger and Lawrence Summers, both of whom served in the Obama administration, shows that more-profitable employers pay higher wages. Any company that attempts to pay a worker less than he is worth will quickly lose that worker to a competitor. Thus, firms that want to thrive must invest in their plants and their workers.

Ask any business owner in the country, and he or she will tell you that it is a competitive labor market. Unemployment is at a 17-year low. In a tight, competitive labor market, employers have to work to keep their employees.

Our focus with last fall's tax reform was on making life better for ordinary Americans, so we set out to put more money in their pockets right away by cutting tax rates across the board, nearly doubling the standard deduction and doubling the child tax credit. As a result, for 2018, a family of four making \$73,000 will see a tax cut of more than \$2,000.

We knew the tax cuts, as helpful as they are, weren't enough. Americans also needed access to profitable careers, good jobs, good wages, and good

opportunities. We knew the only way to guarantee access to good jobs, good wages, and good opportunities was to make sure businesses were prosperous enough to create and maintain them. So when it came time for tax reform, we set out to improve the playing field for American workers by improving the playing field for businesses, as well, and it is working.

Companies are putting tax reform to work. They are investing in new equipment, expanding their facilities, and growing their lines of business, all of which mean more jobs and opportunities for Americans.

Most importantly, companies are passing along the benefits of tax reform. Company after company has announced pay raises, bonuses, 401(k) match increases, and other benefits for their workers. Others are passing tax savings on to their customers in the form of things like utility rate cuts.

The tax reform law has been in place only for 4 months. As businesses continue to see the benefits of tax reform, we can expect to see the playing field for workers continue to improve.

Ultimately, by helping American businesses thrive, tax reform will help give more Americans access to the kinds of jobs, wages, and opportunities that not only will benefit them right now but also will give them access to security and prosperity for the long term.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. President, before I close, I would like to take a couple of minutes to discuss the nomination of Mike Pompeo to be Secretary of State.

I don't need to tell anyone how incredibly qualified he is for this job: first in his class at West Point; 5 years of Active-Duty service in the Army, achieving the rank of captain; editor of the Harvard Law Review; elected to Congress four times by Kansas's Fourth Congressional District, serving on the House Intelligence Committee; and, finally, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Clearly, he has proved his dedication as a public servant and is an outstanding candidate for Secretary of State.

His nomination should be sailing through the Senate, and normally it would be. Prior to this Presidency, we were on a pretty bipartisan track for Secretary of State confirmations. Members of both parties believed it was important that a President have a national security team to support him, and they voted accordingly. John Kerry was confirmed as Secretary of State by a vote of 94 to 3. Hillary Clinton was confirmed as Secretary of State by a vote of 94 to 2. Condoleezza Rice was confirmed as Secretary of State by a vote of 85 to 13, and Colin Powell was confirmed as Secretary of State unanimously.

This doesn't mean that Republicans agreed with all of John Kerry's or Hillary Clinton's policies or that the Democrats agreed with all of Condoleezza Rice's or Colin Powell's

policies. But Members of both parties recognized that these nominees were qualified, and they believed that partisanship shouldn't play a role when it came to making sure the President had a national security team to support him.

Fast forward to today. Gone is the bipartisanship of the past. Today, Democrats are obstructing an entirely and eminently qualified candidate for Secretary of State for the sole reason that they don't like this President. They didn't get their way in the last election, and, in response, they have spent the last year or more obstructing one qualified nominee after another.

I get that the Democrats don't like President Trump, but when you are a Member of the U.S. Senate, you have to think beyond your own preferences and accept the fact that in a free country with free elections, sometimes you don't get your way.

Obstructing nominees has consequences. At the very least, delaying a President's ability to staff his administration diminishes his ability to serve the American people effectively, but that is not all. Obstructing certain nominees, such as a nominee for Secretary of State, can have consequences for our national security and diplomacy. An incomplete national security team is a detriment to the safety and security of our country.

Right now, the United States and our allies are currently facing a number of serious challenges from North Korea and an increasingly emboldened Iran to chemical attacks in Syria and the ever-present threat of terrorists. It is vital that the President have a fully equipped national security team to monitor and address these dangers. It is beyond irresponsible that Senate Democrats are compromising the President's ability to respond to threats simply because they prefer not to confirm anyone he has nominated.

Democrats should immediately drop their obstruction of Mike Pompeo and confirm him as Secretary of State, and they should stop obstructing other qualified national security nominees, such as Andrea Thompson, a native of my home State of South Dakota, who has been nominated as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs.

You would think Democrats would be content with their unprecedented obstruction of the President's nominees, but, unfortunately, there is another thing the Democrats are obstructing right now, and that is the Coast Guard reauthorization bill.

Once again, it is clear that Democrats are obstructing not because they have serious objections to the bill but because obstruction has become their default response to legislation in the Republican-led Congress.

Democrats claim that the Coast Guard reauthorization bill has not received sufficient input or debate, and that could not be further from the truth. A portion of the bill they are os-

tensibly concerned about is the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, or VIDA. It has been introduced in the last five Congresses, and more than one of those times it was introduced by Democrats.

The current version of the bill is the product of not just months but years of hearings, meetings, and negotiations. Despite the fact that this year's original version of VIDA had bipartisan support, we made a number of further concessions to address concerns that have been raised by Democratic Senators, but they just keep moving the goal posts. It has become pretty clear that Democrats' real objection is not to the bill itself but to working with Republicans or to seeing the President accomplish anything.

I hardly need to say the Coast Guard reauthorization bill is an important bill. It authorizes the Coast Guard's funding, as well as pay and benefits for Coast Guard personnel, who play a vital role in maintaining national security and law and order in the waters around the United States.

It would be nice if Democrats would consider dropping their partisan objections and working with Republicans to pass this essential piece of legislation and working with us to help get confirmed particularly critical national security nominees at a time when we face an array of threats across the entire planet.

Nominees like the Secretary of State, particularly well-qualified ones, are not to be trifled with. It is not a time to play politics when you are dealing with America's vital national security interests.

I hope that this Chamber, this body, will return to the tradition we have had in past administrations in which we have approved Secretaries of State, as I said earlier, by votes of 94 to 3, 94 to 2, 85 to 13, and unanimously. Those were the last four Secretaries of State. This has turned into a partisan game, if you will, at a time when our country really can't afford for us to play partisan games.

I hope when this vote comes up later this week, we will have a big bipartisan vote, consistent with our history and consistent with the fact that when you have a qualified nominee for an important position like this, this Senate comes together, takes very seriously its constitutional role in the confirmation process, and has that vote—hopefully, a big bipartisan vote in support of Mike Pompeo.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

NORTH KOREA

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I have been pleased to hear about the progress in the planned negotiations with North Korea over their nuclear program. I was glad to hear of Director Pompeo's successful visit to North Korea, and I, as much as anyone in this body, wishes the administration success in these talks and negotiations. Given the history of broken promises, I have my