

is far outside the judicial mainstream. Throughout his career, he has maintained affiliations with anti-LGBT organizations and expressed personal views that are contrary to the interests of American workers—the very people President Trump defends: the American working people. He appoints judges who undo their rights, their opportunities, their ladders up. This is an example. Unfortunately, the majority is, once again, bucking a century-old tradition of respecting the opposition of home State Senators and moving forward with the consideration of yet another hard-right, anti-working class ideologue.

On Thursday, the Judiciary Committee will consider the nomination of Ryan Bounds for a circuit court seat in Oregon, although neither Senator WYDEN nor Senator MERKLEY, the two Senators from Oregon, have returned a blue slip on his nomination. Recently, we learned that Mr. Bounds had some rather offensive writings that he failed to disclose to the bipartisan Federal Judicial Selection Advisory Committee established by the two Oregon Senators to recommend potential nominees. Nonetheless, of course, the Republican majority, prodded on by the hard-right ideologues, is moving ahead with his nomination, over the tradition of the blue slips, over these recent revelations.

Next week, the Senate will likely move to the pending nomination of Thomas Farr to the Eastern District of North Carolina, currently the longest vacancy in the United States. Part of the reason the State seat has remained open for so long is because Republican Senators blocked an Obama nominee, Jennifer May-Parker, for nearly 3 years. With Mr. Farr's nomination, we have another example of a vacancy that only exists because Democrats recognized and respected the blue-slip tradition—a tradition the Republicans have so unceremoniously discarded.

Not only has Mr. Farr spent his long legal career working against the rights of unions and the rights of workers to organize, Farr has demonstrated himself to be a partisan.

After challenging multiple congressional maps drawn by North Carolina's Democrats, Mr. Farr vigorously defended the most recent maps drawn by North Carolina's Republicans which, in fact, were overturned by the Supreme Court for discrimination. Mr. Farr also defended North Carolina's restrictive voter ID law passed by the Republicans, arguing that voter ID was a "minor inconvenience" for voters. Might I remind my colleagues, this is the same voter ID law that the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals determined was passed with "discriminatory intent" and which "targeted African Americans with almost surgical precision." Those are the Fourth Circuit's words, not mine. That is whom we are putting on the bench—people who support laws that blatantly discriminate against people of color. What are we

coming to in this country? Where are our ideals when it comes to picking people for the bench? I am sure they can find conservative folks who don't have these kinds of egregious pieces of behavior.

I have long argued that we should judge our judges on three metrics: excellence, moderation, and diversity. By dint of his legal career in defense of partisan Republican issues, Mr. Farr clearly lacks moderation and is even willing to defend the most strident attempts by North Carolina Republicans to game the congressional maps and make it more difficult for minorities to vote.

I will strongly—strongly—oppose his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

THE ECONOMY

Finally, Madam President, on the economy, during the 8 years of President Obama's term, Democrats worked to turn the economy around, to dig our country out of the recession, and get back to growing the economy and the middle class. Now that Republicans are in charge, their policies are almost the reverse.

Instead of focusing on the middle class and those struggling to get there, Republicans have elected to turn over the keys to big corporations and the superwealthy—their benefactors. Instead of trying to bring down the cost of everyday items, Republican economic policies have driven up the costs of things like healthcare and gasoline. By sabotaging our current healthcare system, President Trump and Republicans have caused insurance rates to increase by double digits across several States. Yesterday, insurers in the States of Washington and New York both announced an average rate increase of about 20 percent, similar to double-digit increases in Virginia and Maryland. Americans were already struggling with the high cost of healthcare before these increases. Republican policies have only made these problems worse.

What about gas prices? By pulling out of the Iran deal and failing to get tough with OPEC, President Trump has contributed to the increase in gas prices. He hangs out and seems to be friendly with the Crown Prince, head of the UAE, even President Putin. Why isn't he jawboning them, his so-called friends, to help the average American family not have to pay increases in the high price of gas?

President Trump was quick to blame President Obama when gas prices went up. Well, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. American families are now paying over \$3 for a gallon of gas in many places, and prices are expected to continue to rise over the summer.

Meanwhile, as costs go up for the middle class, in many, many cases far outweighing any break they got on the tax bill, corporations and the rich are reaping a windfall from the Republican tax bill. Listen to this. So far, in 2018,

corporations have announced plans to spend more than \$450 billion in corporate stock buybacks, a maneuver that directs profits into the pockets of wealthy executives and shareholders but does little for workers. Even Republican Senator MARCO RUBIO has said that "there's no evidence whatsoever" that the corporate tax cut Republicans passed last year is overwhelmingly benefiting workers."

In a nutshell, this is the new Republican economy: a bonanza for the corporations and the rich, higher costs for everybody else. In November, the American people will get to decide if they want a government that works on their behalf or more of the same top-down, trickle-down policies that have failed time and again—and are failing once again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I want to take just a few minutes to talk about the last 18 months and what a Republican-led Congress has done during the first 500 days of the Trump administration.

I heard my friend the Democratic leader call this a Republican economy, and I am proud to embrace that for the reasons I will mention here in just a moment and contrast that to life in America postrecession, in 2008, where slow economic growth, high unemployment, and a disproportionate number of people not even seeking work were accepted as the new norm.

The American people understand they don't have to accept that as the new normal—that we can aspire to better, and we can do better, and that is exactly what we have seen manifested in the American economy. The rank-and-file American worker, every American family, and everybody in this country—regardless of race, ethnicity, whatever identity you might want to talk about—have benefited.

There have been many accomplishments, but perhaps the greatest, as I said, is the new energized state of the economy. There is a sense of hope and optimism once again. We can see that reflected in people's retirement accounts mainly invested in the stock market. The stock market has boomed since the Trump election, and that is not just for the big corporations. That is for the teachers, the pension funds, the firefighters, the first responders—for average Americans who invest their retirement savings in mutual funds or in the stock market—and they have benefited.

The unemployment rate has reached a 48-year low—a 48-year low—and 14 States have hit record low unemployment as well.

My friend from New York talked about gasoline prices. Oil output jumped to the highest on record in March, including a 4-percent increase in production in my home State. In

other words, we are depending less and less on imported oil from Saudi Arabia and Middle East countries, which have been the focus of our geopolitics for so many years because they have been the main source of the energy that drives the world economy, and now we are producing more of that here in America. That means more jobs and more national security right here at home.

Consumer confidence is at a 17-year high. People are feeling optimistic and hopeful about the future. Nearly 3 million jobs have been created since President Trump took office, including 304,000 in the manufacturing sector, 337,000 in construction, and 223,000 in May alone.

What I hear time and again when I go back to Texas is employers saying: We are having a hard time finding the workers we need because there is so much demand for workers, for laborers, that now employers are having to compete for the workforce they need in order to perform the jobs they have now, as a result of the growing economy. What does that mean? It means that paychecks go up as there are labor shortages, and employers have to compete more for that workforce. Sixty-seven percent of Americans believe that now is a good time to find a quality job.

The biggest challenge we have, given the rapidly evolving nature of our global economy and of technology and the jobs that are being created, is to train and equip the workforce of tomorrow for the jobs that will be available. That is why we have invested so much money in our community colleges and workforce training, in partnerships with industry—to make sure that more and more people can qualify for those good, well-paying jobs.

I am thinking about a single mom, a Hispanic woman in Amarillo, TX, who worked as a jail guard—until she went to Amarillo community college and learned how to be an aircraft mechanic. Today, she works on the production line for the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, one of the most advanced air platforms in the world. My recollection is that she is making \$18 an hour now. That is a real solution for a real problem, and I bet every Member of this Chamber could talk about similar stories.

In Houston, as a result of the natural gas renaissance in this country—thanks to the science, thanks to the creativity and innovation of the American energy companies—we are now seeing a huge influx of petrochemical companies reestablishing themselves in places where they can get access to low-cost feedstock fuel. What that is doing is creating even more jobs.

In the Pasadena Unified School District and around the Houston area, they are working with San Jacinto community college to help people who don't yet have the skills they need get the certificates they need in order to qualify for those good, well-paying jobs. Not everybody needs to go to a 4-

year liberal arts college. If they want to, I am all for it. But many people want to get a good job, enjoying the solid middle class, and do jobs that need to be done. They need access to training in order to get the qualifications they need. That, to me, is one of the big challenges that confront us, particularly as the economy changes so quickly because of technology.

Another big reason the economy has taken off like a rocket is the tax reform package we passed last summer. That has been perhaps the biggest game changer. The problem my friend the Democratic leader has is that every single Democrat voted against it. Remember, NANCY PELOSI called the benefits of that “crumbs.” What it has done is open doors and new opportunities for American families.

According to the White House, American families will receive \$3.2 trillion in gross tax cuts, and they have seen the child tax credit double. The top corporate rate was lowered from 35 to 21 percent so that American businesses could be more productive.

When President Obama talked about the need for America to be more competitive by lowering that corporate rate, he talked about our need to compete in the global economy. When we debated the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Democrats called it a corporate giveaway. That is absolutely indefensible.

The results of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act have been profound, indeed. More than 500 companies have used these tax savings to benefit their employees. They have announced pay raises, 401(k) match increases. There have been cuts to utility rates for seniors and people on fixed incomes because investor-owned utilities have had to lower their charges in order to comply with the law, which allows them a reasonable rate of return. They can't charge what the market will bear; they need to comply with their local laws. So what we have seen is that many investor-owned utilities have lowered utility rates for seniors and people on fixed incomes.

We have seen other businesses offer substantial bonuses and other benefits. A recent survey by the National Association of Manufacturers showed that 77 percent of manufacturers in America intend to increase hiring, and 93 percent of them have a positive outlook.

One of the things President Trump talked about during his campaign was that so much of our manufacturing had moved overseas. But what these numbers indicate is that the manufacturing sector is alive and well here in the United States when given the opportunity to compete on a level playing field.

This is the kind of optimism I am hearing when I visit places like College Station, Austin, and Amarillo, home of the Big Texan 72-ounce steak. If you can eat it in an hour, along with a baked potato, you can get the meal for free. I didn't try that, but some people do, and some people get the free meal—

but not a lot of people, would be my guess.

In Austin, I visited with one of the owners of Wally's Burgers and met with other small businesses—pest control companies and the like—and they talked about the benefits they are seeing in their small businesses from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The stories just go on and on and on.

I have also had constituents write to my office, explaining how the boost in their monthly paychecks is making a big difference when it comes to buying groceries, paying bills, and starting long-delayed projects. Maybe no Democrat voter lives paycheck to paycheck, but I can tell you, some of my constituents do, and they appreciate the additional money in their paycheck as a result of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

I think what happened, when our Democratic colleagues unanimously voted against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, they were making a big bet that we would fail to deliver that bill, and it would somehow be an embarrassment and setback for this side of the aisle. Well, they bet against the American people, and they bet against our commitment to make sure the benefits of this bill would be delivered to the average American family.

In one recent piece of news, Costco, which has ten locations in Texas, announced they would be increasing wages for 130,000 employees, not because the government mandated it but because they need to do that in order to be competitive, and they are passing the benefits on to their employees. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Amidst all of this good news, we also need to remember that there are two specific targeted measures that are often overlooked. It repealed ObamaCare's burdensome tax on the middle class, who refused to purchase Washington-mandated health insurance. This is the so-called ObamaCare mandate. It basically was a tax on poor and middle-income people who couldn't afford to buy the high-price ObamaCare policies.

We also opened up something that has been a point of contention for many, many years—the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to energy exploration.

Senator SCOTT from South Carolina talked about his Opportunity Zone provision, which provides tax benefits to businesses that start a business and grow a business in poor and blighted areas. Senator FISCHER from Nebraska talked about her tax provision, which provides encouragement to employers to provide family leave when families need that in order to deal with a family illness or a newborn child or whatever the case may be.

Those are real and tangible benefits to the people we serve. And our colleagues want to talk about corporate giveaways? That is pure demagoguery, short and simple. What else do you have when you have made a bet and you lost that bet by betting against the benefits from this bill?

It is not just the economy that deserves mention; another important accomplishment has been the confirmation of judges who will interpret the Constitution faithfully and say what the law is, not what, because of their personal policy preferences, they wish it might be.

In a former life, I served on the bench—the State bench, not the Federal bench—for 13 years at the trial court level and on the Texas Supreme Court. I believe very strongly in the importance of having judges—that third branch of government—who will understand and appreciate their role in the U.S. Government. In other words, the reason we don't elect judges is because we don't expect them to gauge public opinion. The reason we don't expect them to campaign on an agenda—we expect them to interpret the law, including the Constitution of the United States, the fundamental law, not to promote policies based on their preference or based on some ideology. To me, that is the opposite of what we want judges to do.

The Trump administration has seen confirmed 21 circuit court judges. These are the intermediate appeals court judges who essentially are the court of last resort for most cases since the U.S. Supreme Court now only hears about 80 cases a year. They provide the guidance in the most difficult cases, where the circuit courts are divided.

This now means that one in eight appeals court judges has been appointed by President Trump and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. These are people who will serve not just 4 years, not just 6 years, not just 8 years, but perhaps 20 years or 30 years or longer—a lifetime tenure. These circuit courts will hear appeals from district courts that set binding precedent for those lower courts on a wide range of issues.

It is worth pointing out that President Obama's 21st circuit court nominee was not confirmed until 33 months into his administration. So it is not just that we are confirming good judges; we are doing it at a very good clip, comparatively speaking.

The President has appointed and we have confirmed two judges to the Fifth Circuit who serve the State of Texas—Don Willett, a former justice on the Texas Supreme Court, and Jim Ho, the former Texas solicitor general. We have one in the queue who has been voted out of committee, Andy Oldham, the counsel to our Governor, who has been nominated to the Fifth Circuit. And that is not to mention some very talented district judges, the people who are at the ground level of our civil justice system, people like Karen Scholer and David Counts. We hope to have one more Federal district judge confirmed before the end of this week—Fernando Rodriguez, whom Senator CRUZ and I recommended to the President and he has nominated.

The other major accomplishment of this administration over the last 18 months is repealing burdensome over-

regulation from the previous administration. Many of these regulations were passed by the Obama administration as they were heading out the door, without a real opportunity for public input and review. We have repealed a historic number—16 of them—using the Congressional Review Act. Previously, there had been only one example where Congress had repealed a regulation using the Congressional Review Act.

Thanks to the junior Senator from Pennsylvania, we have also repealed something that was a bullying tactic by the Federal Government. This was a scheme by the previous administration to use guidance from Federal agencies where they didn't pass a rule, where they were required under the law to gain input as part of that rulemaking process. So what they would do is they would issue guidance. You can imagine how that was treated by people in the private sector. They didn't want to have to defend a lawsuit, so they grudgingly complied with the guidance even though there wasn't any process and input from the public on what that guidance should be. Thanks again to our colleague Senator TOOMEY, we have successfully repealed those sorts of quasi-regulations, as well, using the Congressional Review Act.

Our use of the Congressional Review Act has been referred to as the most ambitious regulatory rollback since Ronald Reagan.

As I talk to people, the job creators in our country, they tell me that not only has it been the tax cuts, but it has been the regulatory rollback and it has been the signal that Washington is sending that businesses small and large will have more freedom to pursue their ends, their dreams, without the wet blanket of government regulation.

President Trump has also used his executive branch pen to issue 22 de-regulatory actions for every new regulatory one. These are big wins, including for our farmers and energy producers.

On top of that, when it comes to ObamaCare, one of the aspects of ObamaCare was something called the Independent Payment Advisory Board. We repealed that in our budget agreement earlier this year, which will allow seniors and their families to take greater control of their healthcare decisions without being subjected to the whims of unelected bureaucrats.

What “unelected bureaucrats” translates into is “unaccountable bureaucrats.” In other words, if you don't like what the bureaucrat is doing, you have almost no recourse, and that is by design in this Independent Payment Advisory Board. When it comes to your healthcare, you want to maintain your ability to petition your representatives if you feel the government is not treating you correctly, which this Independent Payment Advisory Board eliminated.

A fourth major accomplishment is providing relief to our community and midsized financial institutions, which

have been hit hardest by some of the one-size-fits-all rulemaking approaches under Dodd-Frank. We all remember that Dodd-Frank was a response to the financial crisis of 2008, followed by the great recession. Congress, as it often does, went too far. The pendulum swung too far and affected our community banks and credit unions. I tell my community bankers in Texas: You weren't the target, perhaps, but you were the collateral damage.

We want small businesses and working families to succeed. We want them to get access to credit, the credit they need in order to succeed. Regulating community banks out of business is not the answer.

This bill was sponsored by the senior Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAPO, and was passed on a bipartisan basis. This bill, which just passed the House, is a big win for smaller financial institutions, and it will make it easier for them to serve their communities by approving mortgages, providing credit, and lending to small businesses. This isn't mainly a win for the small banks; this is a win for their customers, for the small businesses and individuals who need access to the credit they could not get under the status quo.

Another thing that we have done recently which I think bears note—unfortunately, so much happens in Washington, and it seems like every 15 minutes there is breaking news, and sometimes we overlook and don't celebrate these great victories, in this case on behalf of our veterans. We have been accomplishing a lot for our servicemembers and veterans. Last year, we helped restore America's defense with the greatest investment in our military in 15 years and largest troop pay increase in 8 years.

We have a bad habit here in Congress: After we have fought a war, we begin to think we can cash the peace dividend. We start to think, OK, now the world is safe, and now we can roll back our money spent on national security. Unfortunately, the world continues to be a dangerous place, and the world needs American leadership. Unfortunately, that is expensive, but there really is no option because if we don't have peace, if we don't have stability, none of the other benefits of life—liberty and the pursuit of happiness—can exist.

Getting back to our veterans, we passed the VA MISSION Act in the last couple of weeks, which will make significant reforms to the Department of Veterans Affairs, strengthening the healthcare and community care options that are available to American veterans. This bill provided \$5.2 billion for the Veterans Choice Program. For example, if you are a veteran and you call to make an appointment and they say “Well, come see us in August” and you can't wait, or if you have to drive 100 or 200 miles—and in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, if you really need to go to the veterans hospital, you have to drive all the way to San

Antonio to get your healthcare—what the act did and what we passed on a bipartisan basis allows veterans a choice. You can go see a local healthcare provider, and you can go to a local hospital if they can provide that service quicker and more efficiently.

We also provided for expanded caregiver assistance. This is a big deal. The times I have been to Walter Reed visiting Texans who were injured in Afghanistan or Iraq, frequently that injured servicemember had a spouse or family member who basically would have to give up their job in order to take care of their injured spouse. It is only right and it is only just that we provide expanded caregiver assistance to those individuals who do that.

Finally, we have seen a crackdown on imported illegal drugs. As of April, the Border Patrol had seized 284 pounds of fentanyl—already greatly surpassing the total amount seized in fiscal year 2017. I don't have to repeat what a devastating impact the opioid crisis—prescription drugs or the alternatives, which are heroin and fentanyl—has had on our communities.

These are just a handful of ways we are doing what the American people elected us to do. We put money back in their pockets. We rolled back regulations. We strengthened our military. We have given healthcare flexibility to our veterans. We protected our communities from harm. The best part of this story is, we are just getting started.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Wier nomination?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 113 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Burr	Cornyn
Baldwin	Cantwell	Cortez Masto
Barrasso	Capito	Cotton
Bennet	Cardin	Crapo
Blumenthal	Carper	Cruz
Blunt	Casey	Daines
Booker	Cassidy	Donnelly
Boozman	Collins	Durbin
Brown	Corker	Enzi

Ernst	Klobuchar	Sanders
Feinstein	Lankford	Sasse
Fischer	Leahy	Schatz
Flake	Lee	Schumer
Gardner	Manchin	Scott
Gillibrand	Markey	Shaheen
Graham	McCaskill	Shelby
Grassley	McConnell	Smith
Harris	Merkley	Stabenow
Hassan	Moran	Sullivan
Hatch	Murkowski	Tester
Heitkamp	Murphy	Thune
Heller	Murray	Tillis
Hirono	Nelson	Toomey
Hoeven	Paul	Udall
Hyde-Smith	Perdue	Van Hollen
Inhofe	Peters	Warner
Isakson	Portman	Warren
Johnson	Reed	Whitehouse
Jones	Risch	Wicker
Kaine	Roberts	Wyden
Kennedy	Rounds	Young
King	Rubio	

NOT VOTING—5

Coons	Heinrich	Menendez
Duckworth	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.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

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 Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, Tom Cotton, Roger F. Wicker, John Cornyn, Thom Tillis, Orrin G. Hatch, Roy Blunt, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven, Richard Burr, John Thune, Joni Ernst, Pat Roberts, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, Steve Daines, Chuck Grassley.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

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).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH), and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 94, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 114 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Gillibrand	Perdue
Baldwin	Graham	Peters
Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Bennet	Harris	Reed
Blumenthal	Hassan	Risch
Blunt	Hatch	Roberts
Booker	Heitkamp	Rounds
Boozman	Heller	Rubio
Brown	Hoeven	Sanders
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Isakson	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson	Scott
Carper	Jones	Shaheen
Casey	Kaine	Shelby
Cassidy	Kennedy	Smith
Collins	King	Stabenow
Corker	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	Manchin	Toomey
Cruz	Markey	Udall
Daines	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McConnell	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Enzi	Moran	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Fischer	Murray	Young
Flake	Nelson	
Gardner	Paul	

NAYS—1

Hirono

NOT VOTING—5

Coons	Heinrich	Menendez
Duckworth	McCain	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 94, the nays are 1.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Fernando Rodriguez, Jr., of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

MAKING PROGRESS TOGETHER

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I am so proud to be here. This is my first time speaking on the Senate floor, and because I represent the great State of Minnesota, I thought I would do the polite thing and start out by properly introducing myself.

I came to Minnesota right out of business school, just married, with my husband Archie, in a beat-up orange car, and with a ton of student loans. Most people who have never been to Minnesota know us for our weather, but we have a thriving business community with a number of Fortune 500 companies, and I got my start working for one of them: General Mills.

The winters were every bit as cold as we had heard, but Archie and I fell in love with Minnesota anyway and, before long, we put down roots. We have two sons, Sam and Mason, and instead of just building a career, suddenly we were building a life.