

upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 938.

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 Peter A. Feldman, of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for the remainder of the term expiring October 26, 2019.

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 Peter A. Feldman, of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for the remainder of the term expiring October 26, 2019.

Mitch McConnell, Richard C. Shelby, Todd Young, Pat Roberts, Thom Tillis, Cory Gardner, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, David Perdue, John Boozman, Roy Blunt, Jerry Moran, Lamar Alexander, John Thune, Tim Scott, John Barrasso, Steve Daines.

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 SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 941.

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 Peter A. Feld-

man, of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2019. (Reappointment)

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 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 Peter A. Feldman, of the District of Columbia, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of seven years from October 27, 2019. (Reappointment)

Mitch McConnell, Richard C. Shelby, Todd Young, Pat Roberts, Thom Tillis, Cory Gardner, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, David Perdue, John Boozman, Roy Blunt, Jerry Moran, Lamar Alexander, John Thune, Tim Scott, John Barrasso, Steve Daines.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HURRICANE FLORENCE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, many in the Carolinas and other communities in our eastern States are dealing with wind, flooding, and storm surge damage caused by Hurricane Florence. In the lead-up to this hurricane and in the ongoing response to it, Federal agencies have played and continue to perform critical roles in forecasting, public safety, rescue, and recovery.

One of the key agencies involved in this effort is the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA. NOAA houses the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center, which is responsible for issuing watches, warnings, and forecasts of these hazardous weather events.

Despite its responsibility for critical functions, NOAA has been without a Senate-confirmed Administrator for nearly 2 years due to obstruction by Senate Democrats. Barry Myers, the President's nominee to lead NOAA, was first approved by the Commerce Committee, of which I have the privilege of chairing, in December of 2017. Ten months later, his nomination sits stalled on the Senate floor, and he is far from alone.

During and after disasters like a hurricane, Americans use products such as portable generators, ladders, and power

tools in greater quantity and frequency than during other times. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has a critical public safety mission to ensure that such products sold on store shelves or over the internet are safe. When there are safety issues, the Commission is charged with taking action. But nominations for this critical agency have also been blocked in the Senate. The same is true for the country's leading highway safety regulator. For months, Democrats have blocked the nomination of Heidi King to be the administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. While she has shepherded the agency in an acting capacity, she has been denied the full weight and authority of a Senate-confirmed leader. So have other Commerce Committee-approved nominations for the Departments of Transportation and Commerce, Amtrak, and the Surface Transportation Board. All of these agencies play critical roles in promoting public safety. What is most frustrating is that this all feels like *deja vu*.

We have already seen this disturbing pattern play out with other safety nominees earlier in this Congress. The nomination of Ronald Batory to lead the Federal Railroad Administration had been stalled in the Senate for more than 6 months over demands by Senate Democrats concerning a parochial infrastructure project. Only after three deadly passenger rail accidents did Democrats finally relent and allow this critical railway safety official to assume his full agency leadership duties.

In another instance, Senate Democrats blocked nominees for the National Transportation Safety Board. This opposition only subsided following a deadly Missouri duck boat tragedy that claimed 17 lives. Once the Board was sent out to investigate and attention moved toward the blocked vacancies, Democrats finally relented to their confirmation.

Maybe Hurricane Florence will have a similar effect on some of these other blocked nominees, but it shouldn't take a tragic national disaster for Democrats to stop making unrelated demands that obstruct nominees from working in critical posts.

I urge my colleagues to stop this dangerous obstruction and instead give qualified nominees approved in committee the chance to lead their agencies so that we are all well prepared for the next natural disaster, safety recall, or serious accident.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in 2017, more than 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses, and 49,000 of those deaths were related to opioids. Opioid overdoses have surpassed motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. Whole communities have been devastated by the opioid epidemic. The situation is rightly described as a crisis.

Here in Congress we are focused on doing everything we can to support the fight against substance use disorder. In 2016, we passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which authorized a variety of grants to States to boost their efforts to reduce opioid deaths and help individuals overcome opioid addiction. That same year, we also passed the 21st Century Cures Act, which provided \$1 billion in State grants over 2 years to combat the opioid epidemic.

In March of this year, Congress passed an appropriations bill that provided \$4.7 billion to address the opioid crisis. Today, we voted on an appropriations bill that will provide another \$3.8 billion to fight this epidemic. Overall, Federal funding to address the opioid crisis has increased by nearly 1,300 percent over the past 4 years.

Then there is the bill we passed last night. The Opioid Crisis Response Act, which passed the Senate yesterday evening, is the product of months of work by five Senate committees. It contains more than 70 proposals from Senators of both parties and represents the serious efforts Congress has made to address opioid addiction on a number of fronts.

This legislation will support critical treatment and recovery efforts. It will help babies born in opioid withdrawal. It will help support family-focused residential treatment programs, and more. Just as importantly, it will also take steps to address what I see as the supply side of the opioid epidemic. It will help stop the movement of illegal drugs across our borders through the mail—the work of the Senator from Ohio, ROB PORTMAN. It will promote research into and fast-track approval of new nonaddictive pain management alternatives. It will help stop the practice of “doctor shopping” by improving State prescription drug monitoring programs.

The bill also provides grants for law enforcement agencies to help protect law enforcement officers from accidental exposure to deadly drugs in the course of their duties.

I am proud that this legislation includes a bill that I introduced, the Expanding Telehealth Response to Ensure Addiction Treatment Act, which will help expand access to substance use disorder treatment for Medicare recipients by using telehealth technology.

The Opioid Crisis Response Act also includes my legislation to close a safety gap in railroad drug and alcohol testing regulations and require the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation to include fentanyl in the drug-testing panel.

Opioid addiction destroys lives, not just the lives of the addicted but the lives of their children, their parents, their siblings, their spouses, their relatives and friends. The Opioid Crisis Response Act and the funding that we passed today will help move us forward in the fight against this deadly epi-

demic. We will continue to make combating opioid addiction a top priority here in the Congress.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I close, I want to mention the good economic news that continues to pour in. The economy created more than 200,000 jobs in August, beating expectations, and the unemployment rate was yet again below 4 percent.

Economic growth in the second quarter was even stronger than we thought—a robust 4.2 percent. Average hourly earnings for workers are rising at the fastest rate since 2009. Middle-class income hit its highest level ever last year.

In 2017, U.S. job openings have hit a record high of 6.94 million jobs. In fact, the number of job openings has exceeded the number of unemployed in this country for the past 5 months. Think about that. The number of job openings—the number of jobs available to people in this country—has exceeded the number of people who are unemployed in this country for the past 5 months. That has never happened before in the history of tracking those two statistics.

Consumer confidence is at an 18-year high. Small business optimism shattered its previous record high to reach a record high in August. The poverty rate has dropped to its lowest level since 2006. The percentage of Americans listing economic issues as the most important problem in the United States dropped to a record low, and the list continues.

These are all facts. These are indisputable facts, and they are the results of policies that are put in place with an eye toward growing this economy at a faster rate and creating better paying jobs and higher wages for people in our economy.

Since President Trump took office, Republicans have focused on fixing those things that have been holding the economy back. We removed burdensome regulations. We passed historic comprehensive reform in our Tax Code to put more money in Americans' pockets and to remove barriers to job creation and economic growth. Now we are seeing the results: strong economic growth—as I mentioned, 4.2 percent in the second quarter of this year—thriving small businesses, with optimism and investing confidence unlike anything we have seen in history, more money in families' paychecks, new jobs, better paying jobs, better benefits, and more opportunities for American workers.

Mr. President, America is back in business, and it is American families and American workers who are benefiting from that. We intend to continue to work on an agenda that creates policies that will drive and fuel economic growth in this country and provide more opportunities, a better standard of living, and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as I rise for my 220th “Time to Wake Up” climate speech, there is abundant evidence that meaningful action on climate change in the United States is unlikely. We have a President who, against all the evidence, claims that climate change is a Chinese hoax. This is the same President who announced last year that he was pulling the United States out of the international Paris Agreement.

This is the same President who installed the theatrically corrupt Scott Pruitt, who owed his entire political career to the fossil fuel industry, to lead, of all things, the Environmental Protection Agency. When Pruitt's endless string of scandals finally proved too much even for this epically swampy administration, President Trump then made a coal industry lobbyist the Acting EPA Administrator.

The fundamentally rotten bargain at the heart of today's Trump politics is that his party is essentially bankrolled by the fossil fuel industry. This is why you see Republicans seeking to freeze voluntary fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars. If consumers pay more at the pump to fill up, fine—what matters is that the oil companies get to keep pumping.

This is why the Republican Clean Power Plan doesn't really reduce carbon emissions. In fact, the EPA's own numbers show that the replacement plan will result in poorer health for Americans, including 1,400 additional deaths a year, but what matters is that the coal companies sell coal.

Republicans even plan to weaken standards on methane leaks. It doesn't matter that methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas. What matters is that the oil and gas industry doesn't have to spend any money to prevent those leaks.

So there is lots of evidence that meaningful action on climate change in this country is unlikely. Yet on Friday I attended the Global Climate Action Summit, organized by California Governor Brown, to keep up progress reducing carbon emissions and fighting the effects of climate change.

At the summit, States, cities, Provinces, and companies from around the world—indeed, foreign nations—made new announcements about climate change and to reduce carbon emissions. Governor Brown himself signed a law requiring 100 percent of California's electricity to be carbon-free by 2045 and committed that California would be carbon-neutral by the same year. Plus, there is that satellite to measure carbon emissions.

New Jersey announced plans to install more than 3,000 megawatts of offshore wind.

States and cities in India announced plans for thousands of electric buses,