

Mr. WYDEN. I thank the chairman for his willingness to work with me on this important matter. I know we believe that further oversight needs to be done; however, at this point, the Treasury Department has been sufficiently cooperative. Accordingly, I am lifting my hold on Treasury Department nominees.

#### CONFIRMATION OF STEPHEN ALEXANDER VADEN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, President Trump nominated Stephen Vaden to be General Counsel for the Department of Agriculture. In that role, Mr. Vaden will oversee all of the legal services for all operations and programs of the Department and 250 attorneys nationwide.

Most of Mr. Vaden's experience is not in agriculture or natural resources issues. Much of his work at the law firm Jones Day focused on election law, and during the 2016 election cycle, he coauthored amicus briefs in States where State legislatures had enacted discriminatory voting laws designed to suppress minority votes following the Supreme Court ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder* which gutted the Voting Rights Act of 1965. State legislatures in North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia took full advantage of the *Shelby County* ruling that removed previous preclearance requirements.

In North Carolina, the legislature passed a law changing various State voting procedures. The legislature utilized racial data on voting practices in drafting the law, and where they saw voting practices that were predominately utilized by African American voters, they changed those voting practices.

Mr. Vaden was one of three attorneys who submitted an amicus brief in support of the State of North Carolina, for Senators Tillis, Graham, Cruz, Lee, and the Judicial Education Project. The Jones Day amicus brief argued that "North Carolina's race-neutral regulations of the time, place, and manner of its elections do not violate Section 2 [Of the Voting Rights Act]." They further wrote, "Quite to the contrary, North Carolina allows all citizens to vote. Although members of minority races may disproportionately choose, for socio-economic or other reasons, not to take advantage of this equal opportunity, North Carolina's practices are not the proximate cause of this phenomenon."

In its published opinion, the U.S. Court of Appeals strongly disagreed with that argument and found that the North Carolina State election law "targeted African Americans with almost surgical precision." The court further stated, "We cannot ignore the evidence that, because of race, the legislature enacted one of the largest restrictions of the franchise in modern North Carolina history," and "Faced with this record, we can only conclude that the North Carolina General Assembly en-

acted the challenged provisions with discriminatory intent."

At the November 9, 2017, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry hearing to consider Mr. Vaden's nomination, I questioned him about his role in the amicus brief in the North Carolina voting rights case. I am a firm believer in the right to vote and deeply troubled by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals findings that the North Carolina case involved voter discrimination.

I did not find Mr. Vaden's answers to my questions to be sufficient. When I asked him if the Judicial Education Project paid Jones Day in full for their work on the North Carolina case, he simply said, "As an associate I did not have access, nor did I participate in the billing function of the firm." I find this answer insufficient.

Also, I noted in my questions to Mr. Vaden that, in my experience as having been an associate at a law firm, if an associate indicated to a partner that they did not want to participate in a case, the firm would certainly defer to their wishes. When I asked Mr. Vaden if he expressed any concern with participating in the voting rights cases to his partners at Jones Day, he replied that he did not.

I also note Mr. Vaden's lack of experience in the area of agriculture. Prior to joining USDA last January, Mr. Vaden had no particular involvement in any agriculture-specific issues or any agriculture-specific clients during his tenure at Jones Day. His nomination is a significant departure by the Trump administration from the background and experience of previous USDA General Counsel nominees, Republican or Democrat. For example, during the Obama administration, Jeff Prieto was a longtime attorney at the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division before becoming USDA General Counsel. His predecessor, Ramona Romero, was an attorney with a major U.S. agribusiness company involved in a wide range of agricultural policy and legal issues. Going back to the administration of George W. Bush, Nancy Bryson was a long-time environment and natural resources attorney both at the Justice Department and in private practice.

I am also troubled to learn that the American Federation of Government Employees, AFGE, came out in opposition to Mr. Vaden's nomination, citing that one of Mr. Vaden's first official acts at USDA was to terminate the labor contract between the office and its staff of 250 lawyers and legal professionals nationwide. In their statement, the AFGE stated that, due to his lack of collaboration and partnership with Office of General Counsel workers, they believe he will "continue creating an agency culture that results in even more unprecedented levels of poor worker morale, with the potential to negatively impact the quality of services provided to virtually all Americans."

For these reasons, I opposed Stephen Vaden's nomination for General Counsel of the Department of Agriculture.

#### NOMINATION OF JUSTIN MUZINICH AND NOMINATION OF MICHAEL FAULKENDER

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am lifting my holds on the nominations of Justin Muzinich, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and Michael Faulkender to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy, both of which were reported favorably from the Finance Committee. I had placed holds on these nominations until the Treasury Department agreed to provide the Senate Finance Committee with certain information I had requested in connection with the committee's oversight of the Treasury Department.

Working with Chairman HATCH, I reached an agreement under which the Treasury Department has cooperated with the Finance Committee on a number of my requests.

For these reasons, I will no longer object to any unanimous consent request concerning the nominations of Mr. Muzinich and Mr. Faulkender.

#### COAST GUARD REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this evening the House of Representatives concurred in the Senate amendment to the House amendment to S. 140, legislation known as the Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018. The House's action clears the way for this measure to reach the President's desk. As the Coast Guard works through hurricane season and continues drug interdiction and other critical efforts, House passage of this legislation is a critical step toward supporting the men and women in uniform who guard our Nation. Among this bill's provisions is a title that addresses the need for clear and enforceable standards of incidental water discharges from vessels. Senator CARPER and I reached a bipartisan agreement, included in this legislation, which places the Environmental Protection Agency in the lead role of establishing standards, which the Coast Guard will monitor and enforce. Clear, achievable rules will be the most effective way to address environmental concerns about the spread of invasive species through ballast water discharges. I am pleased to have reached this agreement, and I want to inform my colleagues that we will be submitting errata to the Committee Report on the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018 Senate Report 115-89, that reflects the agreement we reached. I ask the Senator from Delaware if the Senator agrees that the modifications we negotiated over the last few months have made a significant improvement to the legislation?

Mr. CARPER. I thank the Senator from South Dakota. I do agree. Today, we are one step closer to getting this

strong bipartisan compromise on vessel discharge legislation signed into law. This bill protects waters across our country from the environmental and economic risk of the spread of invasive species contained in ballast water, while also providing regulatory certainty for vessel owners and mariners. To reach this agreement, my colleagues and I did not settle for what was easy or what was expedient. These improvements in the VIDA title have taken a great deal of time and energy, and they were the right thing to do. Specifically, they will reduce the risks posed by ballast water discharges that enter our waterways, minimize the likelihood of introducing invasive species along our coasts and in the Great Lakes, while still ensuring these discharges are regulated under the Clean Water Act. I know the Senator from South Dakota shares my hope that the President signs this legislation expeditiously. He and I will make sure that the legislative history regarding this provision is clear.

#### TRIBUTE TO SHEL GROSS

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Shel Gross, director of Public Policy for Mental Health America of Wisconsin, MHA, on his retirement. Throughout his career, Shel has helped everyday Wisconsinites in their battle with mental health issues and has been a powerful advocate, peer, mentor, and leader in elevating the voices of those struggling with mental illness.

Shel has been the director of Public for MHA of Wisconsin since April 2000. During his tenure, he has significantly expanded the array of community-based mental health services that support recovery and independence. Wisconsin owes Shel a debt of gratitude for raising awareness of both the tragedy and treatability of many serious mental health afflictions.

Shel's greatest accomplishment is his tremendous work in reducing the prevalence of suicide in Wisconsin. As project manager for MHA's statewide prevention/early intervention initiative in mental health, he focused on improving the quality of behavioral healthcare to help lower Wisconsin's suicide rate. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, over 700 Wisconsin residents die each year by suicide. Another 5,500 Wisconsin residents are hospitalized due to intentional, self-inflicted injury. As project manager of a suicide prevention grant, Shel made it his life's work to reduce the number of people affected by suicide or suicide attempts, work that deserves the utmost praise and appreciation.

The Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, MHTF, awarded Shel the Karen Avery Award in 2017, which honors those who have shown tremendous advocacy and leadership in advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Working hand-in-hand with the award's

namesake, Shel helped establish the Grassroots Empowerment Project, GEP, to create opportunities for people seeking mental health recovery and wellness to exercise power in their lives. Shel has been a prominent voice for recognizing and tapping the power of community to help heal the isolation of depression.

Shel will be deeply missed by his colleagues and all those who consider him a loyal friend and passionate advocate. I know Shel will continue to be a valuable voice on these important issues after retirement, but I congratulate him on this milestone and wish him the very best in this new chapter.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 150th anniversary of Wayne State University. Located in the heart of Detroit, MI, Wayne State University provides world-class education and has made a tremendous impact on the community that surrounds it.

In 1868, just over 30 years after the State of Michigan joined the Union, the development of what would become Wayne State University began with the establishment of the Detroit Medical College by five physicians who were inspired to improve medical education after their service in the Civil War. Following shortly thereafter, the Detroit Normal Training School—the predecessor of the college of education—was founded.

At the turn of the 20th century, the school saw rapid transformation and development. A change in attitudes brought on by the progressive movement between 1890 and 1920 impacted institutions across America. In 1917, the Detroit College of Medicine and Surgery admitted its first female students, as the Detroit Normal Training School began admitting married women. These milestones in the school's history coincided with the culmination of women's suffrage in the United States. In 1934, the Wayne University name was adopted, eventually becoming Wayne State University in 1956, after the Michigan State Legislature approved public act 183.

Year after year, Wayne's footprint would grow to include more programs and opportunities for students to excel. Growth of that footprint included Detroit City Law School, which was founded in 1927 and later became part of Wayne University in 1933. Moreover, as veterans from World War II came home and acclimated into civilian life, Wayne University established the office of veteran affairs to help veterans continue their education, enter vocational training programs, and transition into the workforce. With the introduction of the GI bill, Wayne University's programs saw it well posi-

tioned to increase its veteran enrollment.

In 1950, the former central high school and main building of the College of the City of Detroit was renamed Old Main, becoming one of the City of Detroit's and Wayne University's most notable landmarks.

The 1960s proved to be a pivotal time in American history, with the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war serving as the backdrop of the public's conscience, ushering in a new era of barrier breaking civic engagement. Throughout the 1960s, Wayne State University continued to build on its rich tradition of progressivism by establishing the office of counseling for the handicapped, the center for urban studies, and covering pertinent social issues in the school newspaper.

Continuing to build on its record of success, Wayne State launched doctoral programs in the college of pharmacy and college of nursing, and established the college of urban, labor, and metropolitan affairs, and college of fine and performing arts. In 1994, Wayne State was recognized for its research and was classified as a Research I university by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Ever mindful of its position within the community as a bridge for stakeholders across all fields of endeavor, Wayne State has forged numerous partnerships to empower the community and its students to succeed in a rapidly changing world. In 2004, the first phase of TechTown was completed, which brought Wayne State together with the Henry Ford Health System and General Motors to support entrepreneurship and technological advancement. In 2013, Wayne State named M. Roy Wilson as president of the university, and he has continued this rich legacy of community partnerships.

Throughout its 150-year history, Wayne State University has fostered an environment of innovation, inclusion, and community. The university is deeply rooted in the city of Detroit and has been an indispensable partner in the city's development and renewal. I am proud to be a law school alumnus and am certain that Wayne State will continue to succeed in its mission to cultivate the Warrior Strong leaders of tomorrow. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this important milestone in the history of Wayne State University as it celebrates its sesquicentennial.●

##### 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF PELHAM BATESVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT—FIRE DISTRICT

• Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, today it is my pleasure to honor the Pelham Batesville Fire Department, as the fire district celebrates its 50th anniversary. Since 1968, the district and fire department have dutifully provided fire and rescue services to a large area of upstate South Carolina, including parts of Greenville County, Spartanburg County, and Greer.