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Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss why we needed to reform the confirmation process. It was absolutely necessary to ensure that the Senate is able to approve the President's nominees in a timely manner.

Delays and obstruction have prevented qualified nominees from being confirmed. In fact, at the pace the Senate has been going, it would take more than 5 years to process the remaining nominees. Clearly, the process isn't working.

In the Senate, we take our advice and consent role very seriously. We all want to ensure that we have capable and qualified individuals serving in important positions. Delays in the confirmation process often have nothing to do with the qualifications of the candidate.

These nominees have been vetted and approved by the appropriate committee, only to spend weeks or months waiting to be considered by the full Senate. Currently, there are more than 100 nominees awaiting confirmation on the Senate calendar. That is because our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been using the filibuster to delay all of the nominees—even routine, highly qualified nominees.

In past administrations, a cloture vote was only required for high-level or controversial nominations that required additional deliberation or debate. Under President Trump, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have required cloture on hundreds of nominees, which means instead of approving these nominations in a timely manner, it often takes 3 days on the Senate floor before a final vote is taken. That is because, following a vote to invoke cloture, there is an additional 30 hours of floor debate after an intervening day.

During the first 2 years of the previous 3 Presidencies, there were a total of 24 cloture votes. During the first 2 years of President Trump's Presidency, the Senate forced a cloture vote on 128 nominations. Think about that—24 for the prior 3 Presidents and 128 cloture votes on President Trump's nominations. For President Obama, during his first 2 years—to compare President Trump to President Obama's first 2 years—12 for Obama. There were 12 for President Obama and 128 for President Trump.

So let me provide another example. During the 8 years of the Obama administration, the Senate confirmed 272 district court judges. Since President Trump has been elected, the Senate has confirmed 53 district judges—272 to 53 district court judges. At that pace, only 195 district court judges would be approved over a full 8-year period, far less than the 272 during the Obama administration.

These delays impact qualified individuals across the Nation. For example, Peter Welte, the nominee to be the U.S. district court judge for the District of North Dakota, was nominated

by President Trump more than 77 days ago. It has been about 230 days since Drew Wrigley, nominee to be U.S. attorney for the District of North Dakota was originally reported by President Trump—230 days. These are qualified nominees from my home State of North Dakota and the Presiding Officer's home State of North Dakota who have been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. Yet both are still waiting for confirmation by the U.S. Senate. They need to be out there doing their job. They need to get confirmed.

That is why we voted today to reduce debate from 30 hours to 2 hours for nominees like district court judges as well as many executive branch nominees, while retaining the 30 hours of debate for high-level nominees—for circuit court judges, Supreme Court judges, and for Cabinet positions. We did not change the confirmation for nominees to the highest levels of government, including the Supreme Court, circuit court, and for Cabinet-level officials.

This reform does streamline the process for other important nominees who have languished on the Senate calendar for far too long. This is a commonsense reform to ensure that there is still debate on nominees, while making the process more efficient and effective so we can get qualified nominees confirmed and working for the American people, as is our job.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

NOMINATION OF MARK ANTHONY CALABRIA

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, as you know and as we know, our Nation is facing an affordable housing crisis.

Right now, we are considering the nomination of someone who will have the power to do something about it—Mark Calabria, the President's nominee to spend the next half decade heading the Federal Housing Finance Agency. He would be responsible for overseeing a \$6.5 trillion housing market that provides homes for millions of American families, and \$6.5 trillion is \$6.5 thousand billion; that is how big a trillion is. He would oversee a \$6.5 trillion housing market that provides homes for millions of families.

Far too many Americans are left behind in our housing policy. Think about this. One-third of all households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. A number that is even more frightening is that one-quarter of American renters spend at least half their income on housing.

One-quarter of American renters spend half of their income on housing. What does that mean?

That is not something people around here, frankly, think about very much. If you are a Senator, if you are a Congressman, if you are some of the highly paid staff people, and many aren't, but if you are the chief of staff or legislative director or if you are a staff director, you don't think about those things.

If you do what Lincoln used to do and say "I need to go out and get my public-opinion baths" and if you see how people live and you see that somebody is paying half their income in rent, and their car breaks down and they don't have \$600 to fix their car, what happens is they can't pay their rent. Then, if something else happens and they get evicted, their whole life turns upside down. They have to give away their pet, no matter what their kids think. They have to move out of that apartment. They have to send their children to a different school. They often have to live in the basement of a neighbor's or a cousin's home. They end up putting their things in storage and losing them.

I don't think we understand what the housing crisis means to, literally, tens of millions of Americans. It is not just in the city, as the Presiding Officer knows. It is in rural areas. His State is pretty rural. Big parts of my State are pretty rural. It is not just East Cleveland or Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati. It is Appalachia, small towns, and small cities like Zanesville, OH, and Mansfield, OH—places where you can't pay the rent or you get your home foreclosed and you lose your home; you get thrown out of your home, and your whole life turns upside down. That is why this is so important.

We are not only talking about renting but also about homeownership too. The homeownership rate among African Americans is at the same dismal level it was before we had laws in place to protect against discrimination. Those laws are barely being enforced. The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development seems to have little interest in enforcing housing discrimination laws. The Senate Banking Committee majority seems to have little interest in enforcing anti-discrimination laws. Hispanic households are hardly better off than African-American households. These are serious issues we have to solve.

As we face this crisis, Mark Calabria, the President's nominee for FHFA will be on the frontlines. He will set policies that determine how many families can afford to buy a home and how much they pay. He will have the power to promote or discourage building affordable apartments to serve the lowest income renters. It is not just that people's wages are stagnant in the Trump economy. Wages are flat. It is not just that. As prices go up, there simply isn't enough housing, so rental units are getting more and more expensive.

If your wages are flat, no matter how hard you work—you might have two jobs, a job making \$9 and a job making \$14, but it is not enough if your rent keeps going up, as it does in far too many cases.

The record shows that Dr. Calabria is exactly the wrong person for this job. He actually questioned the need for the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage. Think about that. That is the primary tool

families use to afford homes and build wealth. I am guessing that almost every one of my colleagues, except those born extraordinarily rich—I am guessing that for most of us in this body, most people watching this, most of our staffs, and most Americans who own homes, especially the first home they bought had a 25- or 30-year fixed mortgage. Before people owned homes much in this country, a century ago, they had to pay off their home in 3 or 4 or 5 years, typically. Almost nobody can do that. That is why we have the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage.

Dr. Calabria wonders whether we need the 30-year mortgage at all. President Trump clearly doesn't know. President Trump knows how to build big apartment buildings and borrow money from Deutsche Bank because no reputable bank in the United States will lend to him. But he doesn't know what it is like to pay off a mortgage and for people who think in terms of, "How am I going to pay off my mortgage?" He doesn't understand what the importance of a 30-year mortgage is. Presumably, that is why President Trump picked somebody like Dr. Calabria to be in charge of housing.

Dr. Calabria has called for repealing the affordable housing goals. One-third of households are spending more than one-third of their income on housing, and it is worse for renters. You would think making housing affordable would be one of Dr. Calabria's top priorities, but he doesn't think we need the current affordable housing goals. He told Congress that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which he would be in charge of, should be eliminated. He would be the one overseeing a housing finance system that has helped more than 28 million American families become homeowners. He has questioned the need for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. He has called for the end of the entities he would oversee that contribute to this housing market.

It is pretty clear—over his years of writing—whose side he is on. During the financial crisis, when Wall Street wrecked the economy and American communities were left to clean up the mess, Dr. Calabria blamed homeowners for this. He called homeowners who were underwater on their mortgage "deadbeats." Think about that. The guy who is going to oversee the whole housing agency market for the U.S. Government said that the people who were underwater—what does underwater mean? Underwater means that you have been paying your mortgage, but because of a drop in the economy or in your community, what you owe is more than what the house is worth. The house becomes devalued because of the neighborhood, because of other foreclosures, because of other people being evicted, and your home is worth less than what you owe the bank for your mortgage. That is called underwater. Dr. Calabria called those people deadbeats. Those people probably work every bit as hard as Dr. Calabria does—

not to make it personal—or as hard as most of us in the Senate work. These are people working hard to try to get ahead. Because of circumstances in this global economy where wages are flat, where the rich are getting richer, where most of America is treading water, Dr. Calabria calls these people deadbeats for something they didn't even do. Anybody who doesn't think families will do everything they possibly can to stay in their homes has clearly never met those who have actually had their homes foreclosed on. I have met those families.

My wife, Connie, and I live in ZIP Code 44105 in Cleveland, OH. That means nothing to anybody who is listening, but the ZIP Code in which we lived in the first half of 2007 had more foreclosures than had any ZIP Code in the United States. We live in a development of about 200 homes that are priced at \$100,000 to \$200,000 to \$250,000, but not far away, in the rest of this ZIP Code, there is home, after home, after home, after home that has been foreclosed on. These homes are generally old. They are generally not in good shape. They generally have very toxic levels of lead that poison children in their central nervous systems.

He is saying that these people are deadbeats—those who are working hard. They lost their jobs. That is the main reason most of them couldn't keep up with their mortgages. These families aren't deadbeats. They work hard. They work a lot harder than the Wall Street traders—that is t-r-a-d-e-r-s, perhaps—who are taking big risks with other people's money.

Some of Ohio's families were laid off, and they tried to find new jobs. They were making \$22 an hour, and they found new jobs at \$14 an hour. They work just as hard, maybe harder, but the new jobs don't pay as much. Some couldn't find new jobs because the economy was in a free fall. In 2010, one in five homeowners in Ohio was underwater in his mortgage. Yet he calls them deadbeats? One out of five people is a deadbeat because the worth of his home dropped, and he couldn't keep up with his mortgage?

At that time, Ohio had lost 375,000 jobs. In that year, Dr. Calabria criticized one of the most important tools that States like Ohio had in trying to help homeowners—the Hardest Hit Fund. The Hardest Hit Fund helps States like Ohio and Indiana and Arizona and Florida. It helps us weather a crisis. The housing markets and the workers in those States were devastated. The Hardest Hit Fund helped more than 25,000 struggling homeowners. It was not enough because the effort from the Senate was not enough, but it helped in the tearing down of thousands of plighted homes; it helped to make neighborhoods safer; and it helped them to recover.

Dr. Calabria said the Hardest Hit Fund was just subsidizing States because their housing markets were getting more affordable. What kind of per-

son thinks this way? What kind of person says these things? What kind of person is so hardhearted that he or she would possibly take these positions if he or she knows any of these people? Maybe he needs to go out and get to know some of these people.

We asked about his solution. He said we should just let prices fall. He would sit back and let homeowners suffer and communities suffer because of Wall Street's greed. This is the man the President of the United States and, apparently, the majority leader in the Senate—down the hall—want to lead in the overseeing of the housing finance in this country.

In more than 100 blog posts, articles, and papers, Dr. Calabria made his views clear. He said the goal of housing reform should actually be to shrink our mortgage market, that we should eliminate the GSEs and the Federal Housing Administration. My colleagues who plan to support his nomination today or tomorrow or whenever the vote comes should not act surprised if he raises costs for borrowers, if he makes it more difficult to develop affordable housing, or if he cuts off access to homeownership for American families. That is exactly what he has advocated for in his entire career.

This is a critical job. It is why nominees like him should be debated. Americans should have the chance to make their voices heard on a nominee like him, who can make it harder for them to buy homes.

My colleague down the hall is Senator MCCONNELL. He has the office 100 feet or so down the hall in which you see high-powered, expensive, suited, well-compensated lobbyists going in and out all day, streaming in and out. They are writing tax bills, fighting for the oil companies, enriching the pharmaceutical companies, and all of the kinds of things that lobbyists down the hall do who, I was going to say, work for Senator MCCONNELL. They don't actually work for Senator MCCONNELL, but they help Senator MCCONNELL with part of what his political organization is. As a result, Senator MCCONNELL, in order to help these special interests, is changing the Senate rules.

It is not enough that Senator MCCONNELL blocked a Supreme Court Justice for over a year. It is not enough that Senator MCCONNELL supports all of the dark money in politics or that billionaires can put money into political campaigns and nobody knows exactly where the money comes from. It is not enough that the Supreme Court is now controlled by the corporate elite in this country. It is not enough that the Senate is controlled by the corporate elite. It is not enough that the White House looks like a retreat for Wall Street executives except on the day it looks like a retreat for oil company executives, except on the day it looks like a retreat for big drug companies. That is not enough for Senator MCCONNELL. So what is he going to do? He is going to change the rules. He is going

to give less time to debate nominees who will have immense power over people's lives.

We talk about judges who serve lifetime appointments. We talk about the heads of Agencies, like of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, who have the power to hold corporations accountable if they use that power. Of course, we are talking about Dr. Calabria, who is supposed to make the housing market work for all Americans, yet who isn't sure we need the 30-year mortgage. Think about that.

We shouldn't be rushing these people through. We need time for the people we serve to make their voices heard. I would hope my colleagues would agree that these nominees deserve thoughtful consideration; they deserve debates; they deserve somebody who will defend them to come to the Senate floor. Let my fellow Republicans from the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee—people with whom I get along well and personally like—make the case for Dr. Calabria. Let them answer why he is not for the 30-year fixed mortgage, why he calls people who are underwater in their mortgages deadbeats. Why is that?

I would hope my colleagues would come to this floor and debate. I would hope that Senator McCONNELL would allow enough time for us to debate. I would hope my colleagues would reject Dr. Calabria's nomination and tell the President to send us a new nominee who will take the job at the FHFA seriously and make it easier, not harder, for Americans to afford housing.

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

### TRIBUTE TO SEDAT ACTON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today it is my privilege to pay tribute to a Louisville, KY, legend, who is simply known as the Handstand Man. Like so many other University of Louisville Cardinals fans, I have vivid memories of cheering on our men's basketball team at Freedom Hall. During high-profile games, when the tension reached its peak, the eyes of every Car-

dinal would look upward gazing upon the gymnastic feats of Sedat Acton.

When the team and the crowd most needed his particular form of inspiration, Sedat would leave his seat and head toward a railing on the second level. As the officials blew their whistles for a timeout, Sedat would lift his body off the ground into an impressive handstand, dozens of feet above the arena's floor. Then, as the fans cheered, he would stretch out his legs under his torso into an L.

For so many Cardinals fans, Sedat's iconic handstand became an essential part of the basketball game experience, but for this fan in particular, his story holds even greater significance.

Like me, Sedat contracted polio at an early age. As a child in Turkey, he endured bullying because of the disease's lasting effects. Sedat would walk the beaches and watch groups of acrobats. He was inspired by their skills and became determined to use gymnastics to gain his own strength, fend off bullies, and prove he had defeated the terrible disease.

Under the caring and watchful eye of my mother, I was able to eventually get back on my feet. By practicing the gymnastics exercises he saw on the beach, Sedat overcame the disease as well. Then, as a teenager, he joined a professional acrobatics club in Switzerland. Sedat performed around Europe for years and showcased his tremendous strength.

In his early 20s, Sedat came to Louisville to live with his sister. Joining a local gymnastics squad at the YMCA on 3rd and Broadway, they performed with the cheerleaders at halftime during UofL men's basketball games. Over the years, Sedat could be found performing during several Cardinals' basketball and football games and even for the Kentucky Colonels.

Around 1980, he began a new type of act. This time, he was in the stands, where he earned the title of Handstand Man. His daring stunt provoked shocks and cheers from those below as he renewed the crowd's enthusiasm and inspired the players.

Over the next 30 years, Sedat's handstands became a regular part of Cardinals' basketball. I remember attending many of those games, and right when we needed it most, we would look to the rafters to see Sedat. He provided a much-needed thrill, helping cheer on the Cards during important games, and eventually to win conference tournaments and even the NCAA national championship.

Sedat's last performance at a UofL game was in 2009, but his legendary status among the people of Louisville remains. A local celebrity, Sedat is frequently recognized for his years of passion for the Cardinals. Now at the age of 74, he remains as dedicated a fan as ever.

Last year, Sedat and his family celebrated the 50th anniversary of his arrival in the United States. He speaks with such pride for the blessings of this

great country and for the opportunities he has received here. One of Sedat's prized possessions is a decades-old American flag. Throughout the years, he turned down many opportunities to leave Kentucky because he loves the city of Louisville, its people, and is so proud to call it home.

It wasn't that long ago that polio represented a real crisis. Through the concentrated efforts of many, the number of polio cases worldwide has plummeted dramatically. Thankfully, we are close to eliminating this disease for good.

I am grateful for the chance to honor Sedat's remarkable life today. With his wife of 40 years, Teresa, their three children, and their growing family, Sedat is fulfilling the American dream. As the Louisville Cardinals look forward to the beginning of the next basketball season, I know my Senate colleagues will join me in congratulating Sedat Acton on his lifetime of accomplishments.

### COLORADO RIVER DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN AUTHORIZATION ACT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my colleagues from the Colorado River Basin and with Senator MANCHIN, the ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, regarding the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan Authorization Act.

I am pleased that we are considering this bill so quickly on the Senate floor. We need to act now as the historic drought conditions in the basin are a real threat to the water supply of 40 million people and 5.5 million acres of farmland.

As the chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, I think it is important that we spend some time clarifying the intent behind this bill. We started last month with an oversight hearing in the Water and Power Subcommittee to examine the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan, which was chaired by my colleague, the Senator from Arizona, Ms. MCSALLY.

We also need to understand what the legislation that we are passing today does and does not do. As I read it, the measure directs the Secretary of the Interior to implement the Drought Contingency Plan agreements upon their execution by the seven basin States. The 2007 final environmental impact statement on Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead enables the Secretary to do so immediately as this document covers all of the Federal actions contemplated in the agreements.

I ask Senator MCSALLY, is that the correct reading of the bill?

Ms. MCSALLY. I thank Chairman MURKOWSKI. Yes, the Senator is exactly