

Tribal groups and entities are also supportive of his nomination. In my home State, the Alaska Federation of Natives noted that, “Mr. Bernhardt has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the legal frameworks of the major laws covering Alaska Native subsistence customary and traditional rights and protections . . . he listens well, is articulate in his responses, and draws reasonable conclusions.”

The Chairman of the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council wrote in that, “the [Tribe] has worked with [Mr. Bernhardt] previously and firmly believes that his knowledge and experience make him a very good fit for the Department . . . we also believe he is committed to building strong working relationships that rely on good faith and respect among all interests at the table.”

We have truly heard from a very wide range of organizations in support of this nomination. The Archery Trade Association wrote to us that “[Mr. Bernhardt] has demonstrated tremendous commitment to conserving and protecting our nation’s natural, historic and cultural resources . . . [his] experience with the Department of the Interior coupled [with his] exemplary history of collaboration, non-partisan views, highly respected demeanor and deeply held passion for conservation and historic preservation make him uniquely qualified for this position.”

One of the reasons that such a diverse group of stakeholders support Mr. Bernhardt’s nomination is that they have worked with him during his nearly ten years at Interior, including most recently as Deputy Secretary and then Acting Secretary. He has proven that he can work with groups, he has formed strong relationships with them, and they respect and support him.

For example, the Gila River Indian Community wrote that, “based on our experience in negotiating and working on complex issues with Mr. Bernhardt we support his position as Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We believe he has an understanding of Tribal sovereignty and the United States’ trust responsibility to Tribal nations.”

The Corps Network wrote that “Mr. Bernhardt has been accessible and responsive to our inquiries, visited several Corps in the field, and joined the Corps Network’s Day of Service last summer.”

These groups are reiterating what we already know—that Mr. Bernhardt’s experience at Interior and in the West; his willingness to listen, build relationships, be responsive; and his ability to earn people’s trust make him more than qualified to lead the Department of the Interior.

I want to wrap up by reading an excerpt from a letter that we received from the Beaver County Commission in Utah: “In our interactions with Mr. Bernhardt we have found him to act with integrity, be open minded to all points of view, and have a contagious passion for the health of our Nation’s

lands and people. These qualities, combined with many others, make Mr. Bernhardt an ideal candidate to serve the county by leading the Department of the Interior.”

I couldn’t say it any better. Mr. Bernhardt knows the Department and the laws that govern it inside and out. He appreciates and respects the Department’s mission. He is the right person for the job—the best person to lead Interior—and I look forward to his confirmation.

REMEMBERING SELINA EVERSON

Madam President, before I relinquish my time, I just want to take a very brief moment to note that a friend, a leader, an extraordinary role model for many Alaskans—certainly in the Alaska Native community—has recently passed.

Selina Everson was a language and culture warrior in Southeastern Alaska and one who fought for the Tlingit language and culture preservation. She was an extraordinary woman and role model. She grew up speaking Tlingit. It was her first language. In school, she was told: You can only speak English. She broke that rule and courageously spoke Tlingit anyway. She was a champion for her culture.

We mourn her passing. This woman not only was considered Grandma Selina and considered by hundreds of children in schools in Southeastern Alaska as a friend and a relative, I considered her one as well. I was honored that she was the one who helped adopt me into the Deisheetaan clan and gave me the honor and treasured name of Aan shaawatk’i, Lady of the Land. So know that I send my prayers to Selina’s family as they face this loss.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The assistant Democratic leader.

TRIBUTE TO MJ KENNY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to honor a member of my staff. I thank Senator FISCHER and Senator MANCHIN for giving me an opportunity to speak at this moment.

MJ Kenny has been part of my team in the Senate for 9 years, and for the past several years, he was a constant on the floor of the Senate as deputy floor director of my staff. At the end of this week, he is going to be moving on to a new professional opportunity.

Unlike many of us who work in this building, MJ actually is a resident of the Washington, DC, area. He graduated from Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, MD, a suburb of the city of Washington.

Walt Whitman wrote in his essay, “Democratic Vistas,” the following: “Did you too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name?” Walt Whitman understood that democracy is more than campaigns. Democracy is certainly more than just yelling at one another. Democracy is a process. It is a daily dedication to the institutions and norms and the rule of law. Making de-

mocracy work takes skill and commitment, and it takes many people who are willing to make a sacrifice and see the demands for long hours and the demands for time on the floor as part of their democratic commitment. This can demand great patience and great sacrifice. I think Walt Whitman would have given MJ Kenny high marks, as do I.

For the last few years, MJ has helped to make sure the Senate does the daily work of democracy. I have counted on him to make sure that my interests were represented on the floor of the Senate, that my constituents in Illinois had a voice in the Senate, and that stories about Dreamers and other important information be shared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD with my colleagues and beyond. Making certain that the information was floor-ready was a responsibility of MJ Kenny, and he handled it professionally.

MJ and my floor director, Reema Dodin, are my dynamic duo who help make things happen around here. Together, they are my eyes and ears on the floor when meetings and other obligations take me away. MJ has also been a big help to so many other Senators.

He came to my office 12 years ago for an informational interview. We tried to decide whether we were right for one another. Luckily, I came to the conclusion that this graduate of Northwestern University in Chicago with a degree in history, who had already interned for then-Congressman and now Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, was a good fit for my team and a good prospect to help us move forward. I gave MJ Kenny his opportunity, and I am sure glad I did. He flourished.

In one year he moved from legislative correspondent to legislative aid to becoming a key part of my floor team. In every job he has done for me, MJ has been a steady, reliable partner. Even in difficult times, he works long hours without complaint and with grit and good humor.

In college, he studied history. In the U.S. Senate and on this floor for the last 9 years, he has not only witnessed history, he has helped to shape it. I couldn’t ask for more in a staff.

I suspect that some of what MJ knows about patience and perseverance he learned as a lifelong, long-suffering Baltimore Orioles fan. It is like being a Chicago Cubs fan. Among his treasured possessions on his desk is a bobblehead of Manny Machado, the former O’s third baseman and Golden Glove winner. Just as Manny Machado left the O’s, MJ Kenny is leaving the Senate at the end of this week. I want to wish him continued success and thank him again for being such an important part of my team over the years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, first of all, I want to thank MJ also, on behalf of Senator DURBIN. His staff does a

great job, and we always enjoy working with them. MJ, enjoy your new endeavor in life.

NOMINATION OF DAVID BERNHARDT

Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the nomination of Mr. David Bernhardt to be the Secretary of the Interior. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources voted to report David Bernhardt's nomination to be the Secretary of the Interior last week by a vote 14 to 6. Members on both sides held and continue to hold strong feelings on Mr. Bernhardt's nomination. Both sides have scrutinized his record carefully, as we should, considering the enormous responsibility entrusted to the Secretary of the Interior.

Whether it be payments for miners for their healthcare benefits, processing permits for the privilege of energy production on Federal lands, or ensuring the U.S. Geological Survey can conduct its critical work of collecting and analyzing data on our changing climate, the Department of the Interior has a huge amount of responsibility and diverse jurisdiction. Furthermore, the Secretary of the Interior is the guardian of our Nation's greatest natural resources.

The Department of the Interior manages nearly half a billion acres of Federal land, or about 20 percent of the Nation's land. One of every 5 acres in the United States is under their control. These lands include some of our most special places—our national parks, trails, seashores, and historic sites. In addition, the Department manages another 1.7 billion acres of submerged land on the Outer Continental Shelf.

The Department of the Interior is also the largest supplier of water in the 17 Western States. It manages nearly 500 dams and over 300 reservoirs that supply water to over 31 million people and irrigate 10 million acres of farmland.

Furthermore, nearly 20 percent of energy we use is produced on lands managed by the Secretary. These include not just coal and oil and natural gas but also hydropower, geothermal, solar, and wind energy. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior manages our trust obligations to nearly 600 federally recognized Indian Tribes and provides services to nearly 2 million Native Americans.

By any measure, the job of Secretary of the Interior is an enormous and special responsibility.

As a former Governor, I have always believed that an executive is entitled to deference when selecting his or her team, as long as the candidates are qualified and ethical. I have carefully reviewed Mr. Bernhardt's experience and his qualifications. I met with him twice before his hearing and spoke with him again by phone afterwards. I questioned him extensively about his willingness to be a good steward of our Nation's greatest natural treasures—our national parks, monuments, and his-

torical sites. I questioned him about his responsibility to balance our resource needs with environmental protection and fairness to the owners of our public lands, which are all of us, the American people. I spoke to him about the need to make sure that those who are granted the privilege of using our public lands leave them in better condition than they found them.

Based on my extensive discussion with him and my review of his record, I believe Mr. Bernhardt is clearly qualified to serve as Secretary. He held senior positions in the Department for 8 years during the Bush administration, including over 2 years as the Solicitor, which is the third highest office in the Department. He has served as the Deputy Secretary for the past 2 years and as Acting Secretary since January. He knows the Interior Department inside and out, and he is well-versed on all of the issues that come before it. He clearly has the knowledge and experience to serve as Secretary.

Now, the opposition to Mr. Bernhardt's nomination comes not from any lack of knowledge or experience but from questions about appearances of conflicts of interest arising from his law practice prior to being confirmed as Deputy Secretary. I had extensive conversations with Mr. Bernhardt about these potential conflicts of interest and his compliance with ethics laws and regulations. I reminded him that he takes the same oath I take—public service, not self-service. We also spoke about the importance of ensuring a culture at the Department of the Interior that reflects the highest level of ethical compliance and integrity.

Based on my extensive discussion with Mr. Bernhardt and the assurances he gave me, I voted for him in the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources last week, and I will support his nomination when we vote on the floor to confirm him.

But I said before the vote in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee—and I will say it again—that I expect him and the Department to hold itself to the highest ethical standards because I assured him I will. Mr. Bernhardt must work to ensure the commitment to ethical and scientific integrity, and I intend to work with him and his staff persistently to ensure this is the case.

Our parks and public lands, our scenic beauty, and our fish and wildlife resources are important to everybody and especially to the people of West Virginia, which I represent, and to the people of all of our States and to the Nation's outdoor recreation economy. West Virginians count on the Secretary of the Interior as the guardian of our public lands, as I know you do, Mr. President, in Louisiana.

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, which I am privileged to serve on as ranking member, has a lot of work to do. We have to address the park maintenance backlog. We

have to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, ensure that companies granted the privilege of developing public energy and mineral resources pay the royalties they owe the taxpayers and nothing less, and see that our public lands and resources are wisely managed and protected.

I intend to work with Mr. Bernhardt on these important issues. I have made it clear to him that I expect him to put his extensive experience and knowledge of these issues to work for all the American people and to execute his responsibilities in a manner that ensures that our public lands are not just being maintained but improved for the benefit of generations to come.

For that reason, I will vote to confirm him to this important position, and I ask your consideration for the same.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

ICBMS

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, recently I came to the Senate floor to speak about the airborne leg of the nuclear triad. Today I rise to discuss the value of another leg of the triad—our intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs.

Following the brief deployment of the Atlas and Titan ICBM weapon systems in the early 1960s, the United States deployed the first Minuteman ICBMs in support of the strategic deterrence mission. Over half a century later, today the United States deploys 400 Minuteman III ICBMs, each carrying a single warhead. While the Minuteman III system was deployed in the 1970s, much of its technology dates to the previous decade. The system was originally designed for a 10-year service life but has sustained an exceptionally high availability rate and is expected to remain in service through the 2030s, thanks to a series of life-extension programs. But we cannot extend the current system beyond 2030, and that is why we are now developing its replacement—the ground based strategic deterrent. Doing so will require resources in a budget-constrained environment and, perhaps for that reason, we are hearing renewed calls to abandon the triad and cut our ICBM force. However, this step would be foolish and dangerous to the United States and to our allied security for several reasons.

First, ICBMs are highly reliable and always ready. That is why they are regarded as the most responsive leg of the triad. Unlike bombers and submarines, which may require time to arm or maneuver, the ICBM force provides the President the ability to promptly respond if deterrence fails. This virtue is often mischaracterized as a source of risk.

The system's rapid response is described as a "hair trigger" by critics who often paint chilling pictures of 400 ICBMs automatically flying to their