

and let him know that even though there were a lot of Senators down here really ripping into him, the vast majority of us—56 of us, at least—think he is going to do a great job.

Why do we think that, Mr. Secretary? Well, certainly with regard to Alaska, sometimes Secretaries of the Interior understand our State and that we are different and unique and that Federal laws passed by this body say so. Other Secretaries of the Interior don't. They don't understand that in Alaska you have to balance conservation with resource development and economic opportunity. Secretary Bernhardt does understand this, and this is refreshing. Secretary Zinke did. This was refreshing. It was a refreshing break from the previous administration, the Obama administration, where Secretaries of the Interior, like Sally Jewell, went out of their way to tilt Federal power in a way that disadvantaged the State of Alaska, despite Federal law saying you shouldn't do that.

Well, we just had a U.S. Supreme Court decision 2 weeks ago saying that that practice of the Department of the Interior and their different officials tilting the law against Alaskans had to stop. It was a huge case that I talked about on the floor last week, *Sturgeon v. Frost*, which says that in the laws of the Federal Government, particularly as they relate to Alaska—the Supreme Court stated it several times in a 9-to-0 opinion—Alaska is unique and Alaska is different. When it comes to the Department of the Interior, it is very different.

Well, Mr. Secretary Bernhardt knows that, and that is one of the reasons why I am so pleased to have voted for him and supported his confirmation, which we just saw on the Senate floor. It is not just me who supports him. Let me provide some quotes from letters and support groups, because, again, after listening to some of my colleagues the last couple of days, you would have thought that everybody was against him. Actually, most groups who care about conservation were for him. Let me give one really important group—the Alaska Federation of Natives, an extremely important group in my State. The Secretary of the Interior has trust responsibilities to lower 48 Indians and Alaska Natives. This group had this to say about Mr. Bernhardt:

He listens well. He is articulate in his responses. He draws reasonable conclusions. Moreover, he has established a trusting relationship with the Alaska Native community around the issues of resource development and subsistence hunting and fishing.

So they have been complimentary and supportive.

The American Farm Bureau says:

This President's nomination of David Bernhardt as Secretary of the Interior is great news for American agriculture. He understands the needs of America's farmers and ranchers and is an excellent choice for Interior Secretary.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies—who are they? Those are the

men and women in each State who manage fish and game like the Department of the Interior. Here is what they had to say:

The Association is appreciative of Mr. Bernhardt's continued support for the great work of state fish and wildlife agencies in conserving our nation's natural resources.

The Congressional Sportsmen Foundation says:

Mr. Bernhardt has demonstrated he is a true advocate for sportsmen and women across the country by working with the community throughout his career in natural resources management, and implementing Secretarial Orders that promote sportsmen's access to public lands.

That is a very big issue in my State. Even a group like Ducks Unlimited says: "His integrity in following the law is beyond reproach." Let me say that one again. "His integrity in following the law is beyond reproach." David Bernhardt is a champion of conservation and the right person for the job.

When I was the commissioner of natural resources in the great State of Alaska—which actually is a job similar to the Secretary of the Interior, where we manage an enormous portfolio of land, water, oil, gas, minerals, and timber—I had the opportunity to actually hire Mr. Bernhardt when he was in the private sector as an attorney helping the State of Alaska with a big complicated lands issue. He did a great job. He was a hard worker. He was a man of integrity. So the list goes on and on of the supporters.

So, again, Mr. Secretary, we just want you to know that given your background as former Solicitor of the Department of the Interior and former Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior and as someone who has gotten rave reviews from groups all across the country, and now as the Secretary of the Interior, my view is that you are actually one of the most qualified individuals to hold this position. So congratulations. You certainly earned it. We appreciate your service to this great Nation of ours, your service to the Department of the Interior, and your service to my State, the great State of Alaska, and we certainly look forward to working with you as you continue your public service for our country, for Interior, and for Alaska. I just wanted to come to the floor to commend you on a strong bipartisan support, and we are going to look forward to working with you.

#### TRIBUTE TO CYNTHIA ERICKSON

Mr. President, it is Thursday afternoon, and it is one of the times that I enjoy the most here in the Senate because it is the time when I get to come down to the floor and do a little bragging about my State and, most importantly, do a little bragging about the people who make Alaska such a wonderful place and such a unique place.

Now, we have all heard the stories about the grandeur, size, and beauty of the great State of Alaska, and they are all true, as you know. To anyone

watching, we would love for you to come on up for a visit. You will love it. It will be the best trip of your life. Right now, for example, what is happening in Alaska is that it is a wonderful time of the year. We are gaining sunlight every day. The snow is melting. The birds are beginning their huge migration back to Alaska. Some flowers are even starting to bloom in parts of the State. It is a wonderful and incredible time.

Like any State, and we all come down here and like to talk about our States, it is the people who truly make my State so special. It is generous people who work tirelessly day in and day out to help one another. So each week, I come down to the Senate floor and talk about one of these individuals, and I call that person "Alaskan of the Week."

Today, that person is a wonderful leader and a good friend of mine, Cynthia Erickson. As I mentioned, we live in a great State—great State to raise a family, build a good exciting life of service and meaning. But Alaska, like all States, has its share of challenges, and one of the biggest and most pernicious challenges in Alaska is that we, unfortunately, have some of the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in the country—as a matter of fact, in a lot of categories, the highest, including child abuse.

Now, when I was attorney general, we made confronting this issue a very high priority. We are continuing to push these initiatives in the Senate. Just yesterday, Senator GILLIBRAND and I introduced a bill that would seek to change the culture around sexual assault and domestic violence through a national ad campaign. We called that bill the Choose Respect Act, and we introduced it yesterday. This is a bill that will be part of a whole series of bills focused on trying to bring respect to our country with regard to these issues. Stay tuned on that.

Here is a fact. We can do all of those kinds of important pieces of legislation here in the Senate on these kinds of critical issues, but as I think we all know that it is really the work done on the ground by members of the community and the grassroots that ultimately has the biggest and most lasting impact on these critical issues—the biggest and most lasting impact on changing the culture that we need to change, not just in Alaska but in the country, on these issues of abuse and domestic violence.

I am happy to say that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of people across my State—heroes all, no doubt—who have banded together using their passion, creativity, and energy to be there for victims and survivors and to help them break out of cycles of violence that often can be generational cycles.

Let's talk about one of those heroes, a very special woman, Cynthia Erickson, and today's Alaskan of the Week, who has spent countless hours

helping to stop the generational cycle by helping Alaskan children, one child at a time, who are victims of abuse themselves and who are living in households where violence is prevalent.

Confronting the abuse of children can be a very difficult issue. It is so heart-breaking and so tragic that we often don't want to talk about it and you want to sweep it under the rug. But Cynthia, with a group of children she has gathered, is working to break that culture of silence one kid at a time. I can't think of anything more important than that.

Before I talk about what she is doing and what she has been doing, let's talk a little bit about her background. Her family is from Ruby, in Western Alaska, on the mighty Yukon River. She was raised in Tanana, a village of about 300 people near the confluence of the Yukon and Tanana Rivers, where she has been living for the past 33 years.

Many years ago I had the opportunity to visit with Cynthia and her husband in Tanana. She hosted me and some other State of Alaska officials. I remember being so welcomed by her and her family but also coming away thinking: This is a woman who is a leader and a woman of spirit and a woman of energy and a woman of passion.

We see that a lot in Alaska with Cynthia. She received a degree in elementary education from the University of Fairbanks. Her family owns a store that she worked at, but she never lost her love for children. Her house was a place where children throughout the town in Tanana went. She had things for them to do, but it was also one of those homes—and we all know the homes we are talking about in different communities throughout Alaska and the country—that kids felt safe in. That was her home.

About 5 or 6 years ago, when there was a series of suicides in her village and in nearby villages, she knew she had to do something. She called the local politician. He talked her into coming to Juneau, our State capital, to work for him. She did that for a few months, and she gathered as much information as she could about programs available to help children in crisis. But she wasn't satisfied. She concluded that there wasn't nearly enough being done.

When she got back home, she took matters into her own hands. Amassing a group of children, she started a 4-H club, which eventually morphed into a nonprofit called "Setsoo 'Yeh." That is Athabaskan for "My Grandmother's House." In Cynthia's house, kids gather to crochet, to sew, to cook, and to be. They glide on the snow outside in the winter, and they swim together in the summer. She told a reporter recently, when she was being honored: "Between all the swimming and the sewing and the beading—we all sewed our own kuspuks—in between all that, we talk about our problems."

Why? Why did she call it "My Grandmother's House"? Because every child that she spoke to who was having problems—and she spoke to a lot of them—had fond memories of a grandmother's home—a place where soup is served, bread is baked, mukluks are sewn, and a place of love and safety. Currently, Cynthia's "My Grandmother's House" is a virtual space for kids in far-flung villages, but she envisions real houses all across the State—houses where children can go and be safe.

First, she had to raise awareness of these issues that affect so many children in Alaska. In 2014 she and seven of these brave kids went to the Alaska Federation of Natives conference. That is the biggest gathering of indigenous people in North America every year. AFN comes together for the conference, usually in Anchorage or Fairbanks, and these young kids spoke on stage about what they had experienced. I remember this. It was so powerful. The stories they told of abuse that they or their friends had experienced were heartbreaking and very difficult to listen to. Importantly, they implored the elders in the audience to stop turning a blind eye to the abuse. That took so much courage from these children and their courageous leader, Cynthia.

When the presentation was over at AFN, it received a standing ovation. People cried, they thanked Cynthia, and they thanked these courageous young kids for at long last having the courage to speak out—remarkable.

Last summer, Cynthia and 11 children and a doctor—a mental health therapist—traveled on a plane, a bus, a boat—we have a very big State—to Fairbanks and to the villages of Minto, Tanana, Ruby, and Galena. It was a healing journey, they called it. At the villages, the kids formed a talking circle to talk about their experiences. Again, this is courage. It is not easy for young children to do this. They ate together, danced, prayed together, and talked some more. Cynthia said about this journey:

It's empowering the children. It's giving them a voice. It's grassroots. There are so many programs out there to help kids, but there are not boots on the ground [on the frontlines]. They aren't grassroots. These kids have had enough. They are sick of waiting for help. I tell them all the time, 'We are the ones we've been waiting for' [for the help].

That is a beautiful statement and a powerful statement: We are the ones we have been waiting for. It is a grassroots movement to do what we all know is right—to work to stamp out this kind of horrible abuse.

We just learned last night that Cynthia has been appointed to the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights. It is no surprise to me. This is a woman of energy, passion, and inspiration who has done so much for these kids—and, by the way, a woman of courage. I am confident she will do a great job in that new position—a very important position in Alaska. She will bring her em-

pathy, her common sense, and her passion to protect Alaskans—particularly our children—across the State.

Cynthia, from the bottom of my heart, my friend, thanks for all the great work you do. Thanks for your courage. Thanks for your energy. Thanks for being an inspiration for all of us. Thank you for protecting our most precious asset, our most precious resource—our kids in Alaska. Thank you for creating My Grandmother's House. Everybody needs a grandmother's house. Thank you. And congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Wyoming.

(The remarks of Mr. ENZI pertaining to the introduction of S. 1770 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ENZI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF DREW H. WRIGLEY

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. President, in a little bit, we are going to have the opportunity to vote to confirm Drew Wrigley as the next U.S. attorney for the District of North Dakota. First of all, I want to thank Leader MCCONNELL and Leader SCHUMER for providing this opportunity to vote to confirm this outstanding candidate.

A little bit about Drew. First of all, he is a good personal friend. Drew is a sincere public servant. He has served our State as our Lieutenant Governor and previously as U.S. attorney for North Dakota under President George W. Bush. He has a servant's heart.

The thing I like so much about Drew is, besides being a professional prosecutor—and prior to even being a U.S. attorney, he was a longtime prosecutor in Philadelphia in the district attorney's office. He is good at his job. He is smart. He is compassionate. He cares as much as anything about the rule and the letter of the law and the victims of crimes. But the thing I like the most about Drew is that he is a courageous prosecutor. He doesn't just take the layups. He is willing to push to the edge for victims, for justice. He takes the tough cases, and he takes them on. Win or lose, he fights as hard as he can for the cause of justice and for the victims of crimes.

So it is a great honor for me today to advocate for Drew's confirmation, and I look forward to the opportunity in a little bit to vote for it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.