

Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stephen M. Dickson, of Georgia, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration for the term of five years.

James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, Joni Ernst, Kevin Cramer, Pat Roberts, John Boozman, Mike Crapo, Steve Daines, John Cornyn, James E. Risch, Roger F. Wicker, Richard Burr, Thom Tillis, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, Mitch McConnell.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 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. 45.

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 Wendy Williams Berger, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

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 nomination of Wendy Williams Berger, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

Mitch McConnell, Bill Cassidy, David Perdue, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Braun, James E. Risch, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Johnny Isakson, John Boozman, Marco Rubio, Kevin Cramer, Pat Roberts.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 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. 53.

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 Brian C. Buescher, of Nebraska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Nebraska.

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.

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 Brian C. Buescher, of Nebraska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Nebraska.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Chuck Grassley, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, Ron Johnson, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Martha McSally, John Boozman, Richard Burr, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 1327

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, the men and women who responded to the horrific events of September 11, 2001, are among the great heroes of American history. Whether fighting the deadly flames, rescuing people who were injured or dying, or removing the destructive debris from the 9/11 attack sites, the 9/11 volunteers and rescue workers displayed the courage and the sacrificial service that has earned them universal respect and admiration.

Tragically, their heroism came at a cost. Their heroism, at exactly these same dangerous sites we are describing, earned them, in addition to great respect, also health challenges in the years since.

In 2001, in response to those challenges, Congress established the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund to compensate both the survivors of the attacks and also the residents who lived near the site. It was authorized for 2 years, and it paid out about \$7 billion in benefits and then closed.

In 2011, Congress revived and expanded the program to cover a larger universe of victims and responders, and

it authorized that fund to spend \$2.7 billion over 5 years.

In 2015, citing a growing need, Congress reauthorized the fund for another 5 years and an additional \$4.6 billion. Of that \$7.4 billion authorized since 2011, the fund has now paid out \$5.2 billion.

With money getting tight, in February of this year, the fund began temporarily reducing the claimants' benefits until Congress reauthorized and replenished it until such time as we can make those beneficiaries whole.

I support that effort. I support it wholeheartedly. The bill before us today authorizes the program not for 2 years, as it was in 2001, or for 5 years, as we did in 2011 and 2015, no, it authorizes the program for an additional 72 years and does not specify a dollar amount.

In Washington, this is a recipe for trouble. As we all know, finite authorizations are how Congress ensures that taxpayer money actually gets to its intended beneficiaries and not simply lost in government bureaucracy somewhere. It is how we make sure this is about protecting those who are supposed to benefit rather than government bureaucrats themselves.

Since 2011, the 9/11 victims fund has always had finite authorizations, and, by all accounts, it has had an excellent record of avoiding waste and abuse. These two things are not coincidental. They go together, and 9/11 survivors and first responders deserve no less moving forward. They deserve no less than to make sure the program created in their honor for their benefit, in fact, benefits them. This is why I would like to offer a simple amendment to this bill that would authorize \$10.2 billion in additional funding for the 9/11 victims fund over the next 10 years. That is the amount the Congressional Budget Office has estimated is necessary for covering all valid claims between now and 2029.

My amendment would further authorize an additional \$10 billion beyond that time. My amendment would not block or delay the bill's consideration, let alone its passage.

This is something we could vote on in a matter of minutes, 15 minutes or so, and then move on to final passage. We could, in fact, accomplish this today before we adjourn for the weekend. This is, in fact, what I prefer. I think finishing our work on this bill to protect victims and first responders is worth 15, 20, 30 minutes of our time. That is what I prefer.

I have had conversations with my colleagues, including colleagues across the aisle. In order to accommodate requests from some of my colleagues, I have agreed, with their mutual assent, to negotiate a different arrangement—one that would make sure we get to final passage on this bill and that we consider my amendment and that of Senator PAUL's within the next few days.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, on or before Wednesday, July 24, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 153, H.R. 1327; that the only amendments in order be Lee amendment No. 928 and Paul amendment No. 929 to be offered; that there be up to 2 hours of concurrent debate equally divided between the leaders or designees; that the Senate then vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed, with no second-degree amendments in order prior to the votes; that there be 2 minutes equally divided prior to each vote; and that each amendment be subject to an affirmative 60-vote threshold. I further ask that upon disposition of the amendments, the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on H.R. 1327, as amended, if amended, all with no intervening action or debate, notwithstanding rule XXII.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

I am grateful that we now have this agreement on timing so that we can get to the floor next week and have an up-or-down vote on the 9/11 first responders bill and the healthcare they desperately need.

I just want to go to the merits of Senator LEE's amendment because I think there is a misunderstanding. I understand that there is a concern about 72 years and that my colleague believes it is a recipe for trouble, but the truth is, the timing is limited for this bill because these men and women aren't going to survive. So many of them are already sick and dying, and all they care about is just being able to provide for their families.

There is nothing about this bill that is trying to play politics with the lives of men. There is going to be no fraud. There is going to be no disuse. This is literally all that is necessary for families to survive during these horrible times when their loved ones are dying.

I will not support my colleague's amendment because it will cap the bill needlessly, and it will mean that if there are survivors who still need healthcare, they will have to come back and walk these halls again. The gravest concern I have is that we dare ask these brave men and women to do this all over again. To watch someone come to the Capitol with an oxygen tank, in a wheelchair, unable to breathe or talk properly because of their cancer and their illness, is something I cannot accept.

I am grateful that we now have a time agreement for Wednesday, and I am grateful that we now have a chance to get an up-or-down vote and to get this done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will not object. First, I just want to thank both my colleagues from New York and Utah for working out this agreement with the leader and me.

What this does is it paves the way, finally, for what we have been waiting on for a very, very long time—an up-or-down vote on H.R. 1327. There will be two amendments offered. We will oppose them. I don't think they have much of a chance of winning, but there is a right to offer them.

I want to thank my colleague from Utah for moving forward here, as well as, of course, my colleague from New York for the great work. Right now, for the first time, we can not only see the light at the end of the tunnel, we are getting very close to getting out of the tunnel. I expect that by Wednesday, we will be out of that tunnel, the bill will head to the President's desk, having already passed the House, he will sign it, and our first responders can go do the job they have been intending to do all along, which is to take care of themselves, take care of their loved ones, and take care of their brothers and sisters who have these injuries or who will get these injuries.

It has been a long, long and hard, hard struggle for over a decade, but now, finally—finally—it looks quite certain that this bill will pass the Senate, go to the President's desk, and at long last become law, and those first responders who made this happen more than anybody else will not—will not—have to come back again.

I do not object to the offer by my colleague from Utah.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I am grateful to the Democratic leader and to both Senators from New York for working with me on this and for getting this, along with my amendment and Senator PAUL's amendment, set up for a vote.

To be very clear—I want there to be no ambiguity—I would be willing to vote on this right now. There is no reason we should have to delay that. I am taking into account scheduling requests that were made by other Members of this body. As far as I am concerned and, as far as I am aware, as far as Senator PAUL is concerned, we would be happy to vote on these immediately. There is no additional reason for delay.

This is how the Senate is supposed to work. Each Member is supposed to have the opportunity to bring forward amendments to offer up improvements to legislation, to make sure that they happen and that they happen right.

I respectfully but strongly disagree with my colleagues on the merits of

some of the issues we have been discussing. We will debate those more in the coming days.

I would reiterate that it is not unreasonable to suggest that a program that takes the unprecedented step of authorizing funding for something until 2092—that, coupled with language authorizing the expenditure of such sums as may be necessary, creates problems. It is one of the reasons we opt to vote on this amendment and one of the reasons I believe in this amendment.

In any event, this is the kind of thing that ought not to be difficult. When any Member of any political background sees a potential weakness or defect in a piece of legislation, the rules of our body are such that we are supposed to be able to offer that up and cast an amendment. In this circumstance, I am pleased that it worked out the way it did, and we will be able to get votes on these amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, just another day on Wall Street and just another news story. The New York Times' headline today was "Big Banks Are Earning Billions of Dollars. Trump's Tax Cuts Are A Big Reason."

So Congress can continue to do tax cuts for Wall Street. Congress can continue to weaken rules on Wall Street. Congress has forgotten. They have this collective amnesia about what happened 10 years ago when this country's economy almost imploded because of Wall Street greed. So now Congress—because of the tax cut and because of continued relaxation of Wall Street financial stability safety rules, Wall Street is doing really well again.

However, Congress can't pass an overtime bill—I mean, sorry. Congress can't pass a minimum wage bill. The last minimum wage increase in this Congress was signed by President Bush in 2007. President Obama never did it, and President Trump continues to oppose a minimum wage increase.

President Trump has rolled back an overtime rule, which in the State of Indiana—the Presiding Officer's State—almost 100,000 workers were going to get a raise because of the overtime rule we passed a couple years ago. So people, if they work more than 40 hours, they ought to get paid for more than 40 hours—President Trump rolled that back—and 130,000 workers in my State alone would have gotten a big bump in their wages because they were working 45, 50, or 60 hours a week.

This Congress will not pass an infrastructure bill. Look at the conditions of the roads in Cleveland, Toledo, Mansfield, Findlay, Akron, Youngstown, Gallipolis, Chillicothe, and Portsmouth, in my State, and all kinds of communities in Indiana, which the Presiding Officer represents. Congress can always find the time and can always find the money to help the richest 1 percent and help the big banks, but we can't turn around and do what