

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Steven J. Menashi, of New York, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

REMEMBERING KAY HAGAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, last month, we lost Kay Hagan after a long illness.

Kay was always a fighter, starting with her days in the North Carolina State Legislature and continuing to when she answered the call of serving the Senate during the perilous days of the great recession. Kay was the right person to fight for North Carolina when she was needed the most.

She came from a family who knows service and sacrifice. Her uncle was Lawton Chiles, a Korean war veteran and former Representative, Senator, and Governor of Florida. Her father and brother served in the Navy. Her father-in-law was a major general in the Marine Corps. Her husband is a Vietnam veteran who used his GI bill to pay for law school. When Kay talked about veterans' issues, she spoke from the heart.

Kay was born into politics. As a young girl, she was putting bumper stickers on cars for her uncle. Her father won an election to become mayor of Lakeland, FL. While interning for her uncle, Kay learned about the ups and downs of Congress, literally. She operated the Senators-only elevator in this building.

North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt first encouraged Kay to run for office when she served as his Guilford County campaign chairman. In 1998, she unseated a Republican incumbent and won a seat in the North Carolina State Senate. For 10 years, Kay Hagan earned a reputation as a commonsense hard worker, interested in results, not partisan fighting. As cochair of the State budget committee, she increased the State's rainy day fund and balanced five straight budgets. She helped make record investments in education, raised the pay for teachers, and increased the minimum wage.

She was one of the most versatile women in her State. She juggled Girl Scout events, winning reelection four times, raising her growing family, and

serving as a Sunday school teacher and a Presbyterian Church elder.

In 2008, Kay ran for and won a U.S. Senate seat, becoming the Senate's first female Democratic Senator. With her family's military background, it surprised no one that Kay fought hard in the Senate for military families and veterans. When she heard about 9-year-old Janey Ensminger—daughter of a retired marine—passing away from leukemia because of contaminated water on the base of Camp Lejeune, she worked to pass the Janey Ensminger Act to help those affected receive healthcare.

Kay also introduced a bill that was close to my heart. It would ban for-profit colleges from using the phrase "GI bill" in their aggressive marketing efforts aimed at separating veterans and servicemembers from their hard-earned education benefits.

Kay was fearless with her voting. She made the toughest votes count, knowing the consequences to her own career. As long as it helped people of North Carolina and the United States, she was always a crucial partner. The Affordable Care Act and the 2009 economic stimulus package were politically difficult for many, but Kay stepped up and supported them. She was brave to the highest degree. Historians will remember that bravery. She stepped up when America needed her. Today, because of it, America is stronger and better.

We will all remember Kay Hagan for her friendship and that we had the privilege to call her a friend and colleague.

She is survived by her husband Chip, her three children—Jeanette Hagan, Tilden Hagan, Carrie Hagan Stewart—her father Joe P. Ruthven, two brothers, and five grandchildren.

It was my honor to serve with Kay Hagan and to memorialize her service to North Carolina and the United States in this statement today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, November is National Adoption Month. Later this morning, I will be spending time with a family I nominated to receive an Angels in Adoption Award this year. The Angels in Adoption Program is designed to bring recognition to individuals and organizations who are, in the words of the program, "making extraordinary contributions to adoption, permanency, and child welfare."

Angels in Adoption is a program in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, and each year Members of Congress are invited to nominate an individual or family to receive an Angels in Adoption Award. I have been making these nominations for more than a decade now. It has been a privilege and an inspiration to meet South Dakota families who have opened their hearts and homes to children in need.

This year, I nominated Mike and Kim Adams, fellow residents of Sioux Falls,

SD. Mike and Kim have a tremendous heart for children. They have five biological children, but as they learned more about the plight of children in poverty, they were drawn to adoption.

God put the country of Ethiopia on their hearts in a particular way. In 2008, they adopted a daughter from Ethiopia—Eva. Within a few years, they had adopted three more children—Selena and Amanuel from Ethiopia and Shakira from Uganda—making them a family of 11. The story doesn't end there. Seeing the poorest of the poor in Ethiopia deeply moved them, and in addition to adoption, they sought ways to help communities stuck in poverty.

The needs of children were particularly close to their hearts. In 2013, Mike and Kim agreed to take over two schools in Ethiopia when the agency running them was forced to pull out of the country. The Adams family formed the Adams Thermal Foundation to support the schools. Today the foundation supports more than 1,000 students in two schools in Ethiopia. The schools' mission is to serve children most in need—those who might otherwise miss out on the opportunity for an education. In addition to academic instructions, schools provide other resources in an effort to alleviate some of the effects of poverty and to make it easier for the children to stay in school.

To name one example, at the end of last year, the foundation completed a project to provide a permanent source of clean water to its school in Ottoro, Ethiopia, as well as to seven local villages. In addition to providing essential health and sanitation benefits, the new pipeline also frees children from the hours-long task of fetching water for their families, meaning more children can attend school.

In learning Mike and Kim's story, I was struck by how love multiplies and expands. Mike and Kim's willingness to open their hearts has led not only to four children finding a forever home but to hope and opportunity for hundreds more. I feel privileged to have learned their story and to be able to nominate them for an Angels in Adoption Award this year.

National Adoption Month is a chance to honor all those who, like the Adams, chose to welcome a child in need of a home. Sadly, not every child is born into a safe and loving home. Some are born to parents who are unable to take care of them. Some lose their parents to war, accident, or illness, and, tragically, some are born to parents who refuse to take care of them or actively seek to damage the great gift in their care.

Thankfully, there are parents out there eager to receive these children. Across our country, there are countless parents whose homes and hearts are already prepared to welcome a child in need. They may not yet know the names of their future sons or daughters, but they are ready and waiting to meet them.

National Adoption Month is a good time to rededicate ourselves to caring for children in need and helping them find loving families to receive them.

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me."

There are few actions more worthy of admiration than a decision to welcome a child in need and to create for that child a secure and loving home.

I am so grateful for all of the generous families across this country who have opened their hearts and found sons and daughters through adoption. I am also thankful for all of the birth mothers who have chosen adoption for their children to give them better lives in loving families.

I am honored to recognize the Adams family today for their embrace of their own adopted children, as well as everything they have done to make life better for children in Ethiopia.

I yield the floor.

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. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, for the past few weeks, including this morning, the Republican leader has amazingly accused the Democrats of being uninterested in making progress for the American people because we are so distracted by the impeachment inquiry into President Trump. It is a ludicrous charge, not the least because Leader McConnell has shuttered the Senate when it comes to legislative business.

The House has passed over 250 bills that Leader McConnell has taken no action on here in the Senate. Leader McConnell proudly called himself the Grim Reaper and blocked just about everything that came through the House long before impeachment was even being talked about. So this idea that impeachment is blocking us from doing things belies Senator McConnell's record. Let me repeat it. The House has passed 250 bills, and Senator McConnell has taken no action on them from January forward.

There are lots of these bills we could have put on the floor this week, but there has been not a one. The Republicans just block and block. They block legislation to protect Americans with preexisting conditions, to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, and even to secure our elections from foreign interference.

A few minutes ago, I heard Leader McConnell say that everything was fine with the elections and that we don't need any more legislation. Go talk to the election officials around

the States. The States are the ones that have the say. The bottom line is they think we need to do more, and the experts think we need to do more. Only Leader McConnell doesn't. Again, he is blocking that. If Russia interferes in 2020—and I hope it will not—all eyes will be on the Republican leader, who has repeatedly prevented us from moving forward on bipartisan legislation to make our elections safer.

To show another example of the legislative graveyard, in a few minutes, the two Senators from Connecticut—MURPHY and BLUMENTHAL—will be moving forward on bipartisan background checks, H.R. 8. It is overwhelmingly supported by the American people. Senator MURPHY and Senator BLUMENTHAL will ask for unanimous consent, and the Republicans will object. So, while the Republican leader accuses the Democrats of being too distracted to make progress, he has turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard, where we hardly ever vote on legislation, where we hardly ever have an open amendment process, where we hardly ever debate major issues. This is despite commitments that have been made by the Republican leader in the past. At one point, he said—and I am sure my colleagues from Connecticut will point this out—yes, we ought to do something on background checks. Yet nothing has happened—nothing.

You don't even have to ask me. My friend the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. TOOMEY, said something last week that caught my attention. He and I may not agree on much, but here is what he said: "Our Democratic colleagues have frequently criticized the Republican leadership and Republican majority for not legislating. Sometimes they have a point." Those are his words, not mine.

I was here on the floor yesterday with the senior Senator from Texas, and we talked about how the Senate might go about trying to lower the costs of prescription drugs. I disagreed with the Senator's unanimous consent request, as it was too narrow a rifle shot. We need to do a whole lot more. Yet we agreed we could work through the issues if the Republican leader would only allow a debate on the floor whereby both sides could offer amendments and receive votes. We Democrats very much want to vote on legislation that would maintain protections for the people who have preexisting conditions. We Democrats very much want to have a vote on allowing Medicare to negotiate with the drug companies to dramatically lower drug prices. Let's have a debate on all of these. Who is stopping that? It is not the Democrats. It is the Republican leader.

The fact of the matter is, the kinds of open debates for which we wish and the American people wish have not happened in Leader McConnell's legislative graveyard. The man who proudly called himself the Grim Reaper goes far too far in accusing the Democrats

of stifling progress. Instead, he should take a hard look in the mirror.

IMPEACHMENT

Madam President, in the House impeachment inquiry into President Trump, public hearings began yesterday with the testimony of George Kent and William Taylor.

Ambassador Taylor, who is a career public servant and a war hero who has long served Presidents of both parties, provided a startling new revelation—that his aide overheard a conversation between President Trump and Ambassador Sondland, during which the President made clear he cared more about Ukraine's investigating the Bidens than he did about helping Ukraine. The aide is reportedly set to appear before the House for a deposition later this week, and Mr. Sondland is set to appear before the Intelligence Committee for a public hearing next week.

All Senators will have an obligation to seek and review the full facts that will be developed by this inquiry to be able to render impartial justice. However, some of my Republican friends in the Senate have said they are not even paying attention to the hearings in the House. The distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary—a former House manager of an impeachment case, who, at the time, repeatedly urged Senators not to make up their minds before the case was in—recently said that he has made up his mind, that there is nothing there. This is before a single bit of evidence has been presented in the Senate. Alice in Wonderland: First is the verdict, then the trial. That is not becoming for the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary.

While my Republican colleagues may not have been paying attention, I have been paying attention, and my Democratic colleagues in the Senate, who know they might have to act as judges and jurors in this case, are paying attention. America is also paying attention. The evidence we all heard from Mr. Taylor and Mr. Kent has cast a troubling portrait of a President who is trying to use the powers of his office for personal political gain. As the public hearings continue, we have a responsibility here in the Senate not to prejudge the case but to examine the evidence impartially. At the very least, Senators should be paying attention.

NOMINATION OF STEVEN J. MENASHI

Madam President, the Senate will vote today on the confirmation of Steven J. Menashi to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

In all my time in this body, Mr. Menashi has been one of the most contemptible nominees to have come before the Senate. He would be a disgrace to the seat once held by the great Thurgood Marshall.

While sitting before the Committee on the Judiciary, Menashi refused to answer simple questions. He showed a breathtaking contempt for Senators on both sides of the aisle. His record on