

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

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. 647.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of David Cleveland Joseph, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

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 bill 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 the nomination of David Cleveland Joseph, of Louisiana, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Louisiana.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Michael B. Enzi, Tim Scott, Marco Rubio, Lamar Alexander, James E. Risch, David Perdue, Bill Cassidy, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, Deb Fischer, Mike Crapo, Kevin Cramer.

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. 641.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Dana T. Wade, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

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 bill 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 the nomination of Dana T. Wade, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Cory Gardner, Deb Fischer, Shelley Moore Capito, David Perdue, Mike Crapo, Marco Rubio, Lindsey Graham, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, Michael B. Enzi, Marsha Blackburn.

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. 705.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Marvin Kaplan, of Kansas, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring August 27, 2025. (Reappointment)

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 bill 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 the nomination of Marvin Kaplan, of Kansas, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring August 27, 2025. (Reappointment)

Mitch McConnell, Joni Ernst, John Thune, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Marsha Blackburn, Deb Fischer, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Todd Young, John Boozman, Lamar Alexander, David Perdue, Kevin Cramer, Tim Scott, Michael B. Enzi.

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. 707.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Lauren McGarity McFerran, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2024. (Reappointment)

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 bill 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 the nomination of Lauren McGarity McFerran, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2024. (Reappointment)

Mitch McConnell, Joni Ernst, John Thune, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Marsha Blackburn, Deb Fischer, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Todd Young, John Boozman, Lamar Alexander, David Perdue, Kevin Cramer, Tim Scott, Michael B. Enzi.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

REMEMBERING JOHN LEWIS

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, as we finally begin negotiations on the next COVID bill, I note that Democrats were ready to come to the table with a sense of urgency at least 2 months ago, when the House passed the Heroes Act.

Before I begin my remarks on education today, I want to pay tribute to the life and work of an extraordinary public servant, my friend Congressman John Lewis.

John was a remarkable man, whose deep convictions and concerted actions made an indelible mark on American history, and we could certainly spend hours chronicling his contributions to public life, from his speech at the March on Washington and the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday to his leadership on gun safety, civil rights, and voting rights during his time in Congress.

John meant so much to our country, but he also meant a lot to each of us

who had the privilege to call him a friend and colleague. Almost everyone who served with John in his three-plus decades in the House has a story or two to tell. I certainly do.

I fondly remember traveling with John to Ireland as part of a peace and reconciliation summit organized by the Faith and Politics Institute in 2014. During our trip, I remember how young Irish activists connected with John's powerful work as a civil rights leader committed to nonviolent resistance to oppression and peaceful reconciliation.

The following year, I proudly marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge with John to mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. One of the most cherished pictures in my office is one of John, me, and the late Hawaii Congressman Mark Takai from that day, and we were all wearing lei flown in from Hawaii.

Mark, whom we also lost too soon to pancreatic cancer 4 years ago, and I organized the delivery of hundreds of lei that day to commemorate the gift from Hawaii's Rev. Abraham Akaka to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 50 years ago for the third march in Selma. News footage from that time showed Dr. King and other leaders wearing the white carnation lei sent by Reverend Akaka, the brother of the late Senator Dan Akaka.

Over the years, that photo of the three of us in our fresh lei has always brought a smile to my face.

I know many of my colleagues have similar stories to share, and it has been meaningful to hear so many people on both sides of the aisle recognize John's life and work in statements and speeches.

It is certainly appropriate to honor John with our words, but it would be better if we honored John through our actions, because while John was certainly a gifted orator, he was also a man of action—of “good trouble.”

The best way for us to honor John's extraordinary life's work would be for the Senate to vote on and pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act, now re-named in John's honor. Action, not just words.

CORONAVIRUS

On education, last week we heard two unbelievable and frankly horrifying statements from the Trump administration about its push to reopen our schools. On CNN's “State of the Union,” Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos claimed that “there's nothing in the data that suggests that kids being in school is in any way dangerous.” Later in the week, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany responded to criticism of the President's position on school reopenings and said: “The science should not stand in the way of this.”

These comments reflect a President and an administration's disregard for the health and safety of our teachers, students, and families.

The President and his enablers accuse Democrats of pushing back on his

administration's reckless policies for political reasons. The truth is, if there is one thing President Trump has made clear time and again, it is that he doesn't do anything without a self-serving political motive.

Come on. We all want our schools to open, including the teachers, parents, and the students I have spoken with. But, of course, we want schools to open safely, without risking exposure to the virus, and I really don't understand why Betsy DeVos doesn't get this.

Reopening our schools safely in the midst of this pandemic would be challenging even with competent leadership in the White House and the Department of Education. Instead, we have a President and Secretary of Education who threaten to withhold funding for schools that refuse to reopen, who support sweeping mandates for schools to reopen before it is safe to do so, and who push the CDC to weaken its guidelines on schools reopening.

The cavalier disregard for our students, teachers, principals, and administrative staff has produced considerable uncertainty in States and local communities already under tremendous stress during this pandemic. Increasingly, they are forced to create their own guidelines, leaving students, teachers, parents, and principals unsure about how to return to school safely. This uncertainty is contributing to a growing anxiety across our country, but it is a more proximate concern in Hawaii, where school districts are scheduled to reopen on August 4—less than 2 weeks away.

Earlier this summer, the Hawaii Department of Education and the Hawaii State Teachers Association corroborated on a plan to provide individual schools a measure of freedom to decide how best to begin the school year. At the time, the low numbers of COVID cases provided optimism that some schools could reopen for at least some in-person instruction at the beginning of the school year. An evolving set of facts on the ground, including a rise in new COVID infections in our State, led the Hawaii State Teachers Association to announce its opposition to resuming in-person instruction on August 4.

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, HGEA, and United Public Workers, UPW, represent school support staff. Both unions have joined HSTA in urging the State to delay students returning to classrooms, citing “lack of health strategies to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus on public school campuses.” Their position reflects the importance of relying on science and public health data to make decisions about our schools.

If circumstances warrant, our policies should change to ensure a safe learning environment. As school districts confront difficult choices with painful tradeoffs, our students and educators deserve certainty, resources, and support from the Federal Government.

I heard this message consistently in my conversations with educators and

students in Hawaii over the last 2 weeks during our State work period. Teachers are particularly concerned about how looming budget shortfalls in Hawaii could lead to a massive round of teacher layoffs and furloughs and broader cuts to education programs. These layoffs and furloughs would have devastating consequences for educators, their families, and the students they teach.

An elementary teacher in Kona on Hawaii Island told me how the threat of furloughs and budget cuts are impacting his life. He is the son of Central American immigrants and a first-generation college graduate. He and his fiancée, who is also a teacher, would like to buy a home and start a family, but they can't proceed with their plans under the threat of being furloughed. He has been a teacher for 9 years and loves his job.

Teachers are also concerned about being forced to return to school to teach without adequate childcare for their own school-age children, some of whom may be physically in classrooms or not. A middle school teacher in Ewa on Oahu had to quit her job and return to Maryland so her parents could care for her infant daughter. The school has been forced to fill the position with substitute teachers who are not certified.

Another major concern for teachers is the learning loss that accelerates when students are not in class.

A high school science teacher on Maui is worried that his students do not have the technology and devices they need to be successful in a distance learning model. Teachers must share computer carts because their school doesn't have enough laptops for each student. He is worried about how students will complete their assignments if they are learning from home 2 or more days a week.

A teacher at my alma mater, Kaimuki High School, added that many of her students either share laptops or don't have access to a laptop or tablet at home.

Student government leaders I have spoken with have also shared their concerns about learning loss and how the pandemic has transformed their education.

A recent graduate headed to college in Boston commented that distance learning was difficult for her to navigate because she did not have access to technology growing up. She described the move to distance learning as “frantic” and explained that it was “discouraging” to continue her studies without the student-teacher interactions she previously had.

A rising senior at Moanalua High School in Honolulu shared how difficult it was to stay motivated through distance learning, especially as his peers stopped participating. He acknowledged that he had probably experienced learning loss.

Another senior found it harder to learn online because she is a visual