

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

NOMINATION OF TOBY CROUSE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I rise this evening in support of the nomination of Toby Crouse to serve as a U.S. district judge for the District of Kansas. I am joined on the floor this evening by the senior Senator from Kansas, Senator ROBERTS, and we take our responsibility seriously in vetting judicial nominees, particularly true when the seat that is under consideration—when the seat that is vacant—is from our home State of Kansas. We need good, solid judges who interpret the Constitution in ways that enforce the law and provide justice and equity.

I can tell my colleagues that Toby Crouse is highly qualified, both professionally and personally, to fill this seat.

Toby has had a distinguished career since earning a law degree from the University of Kansas. He completed two Federal clerkships, including one that was with the Tenth Circuit. He then became a partner at Kansas's largest law firm, Foulston Siefkin, before he was appointed as the State's solicitor general in 2013, a position he currently holds while maintaining a solo law practice.

Throughout his career, Toby has come to possess extensive trial and appellate experience in both State and Federal courts. As the solicitor general, he has argued before the Supreme Court three times.

I have had the opportunity to have numerous conversations with Toby, with his law professors, with his colleagues, and members of the bar in Kansas, and he comes highly recommended. The bar in Kansas, as well as the bench, is anxious for this position to be filled so that justice will not be delayed. And the American Bar Association rates Toby as "well qualified."

I want to thank Chairman GRAHAM and the Judiciary Committee for approving this nomination and Leader MCCONNELL for bringing this nomination to the floor for our consideration this evening. I am confident that Mr. Crouse will serve on the Federal bench with distinction, and I encourage my colleagues to vote for his final confirmation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor today to talk about the work of my good friend and colleague, the junior Senator from Georgia, Senator KELLY LOEFFLER. Republicans, including the Senator from Georgia, continue to put forward solutions to address one of our country's most pressing problems, and that, of course, is healthcare. As a doctor, I recognize that healthcare remains a top priority for families all across this great country.

Senator LOEFFLER also knows how important healthcare is to families, not just across her State of Georgia but to families all around America. She has a proposal. It is called Modernizing Americans' Health Care. It is a plan, and this plan is another example of the important contribution that she is making here in the Senate to the well-being of the entire Nation.

Her plan emphasizes that Americans with preexisting conditions must be protected. My colleague is absolutely right: Everyone knows someone with a preexisting condition. My own wife Bobbi is a breast cancer survivor. She has had three operations. She has had chemotherapy twice, and she has now survived that cancer by over 15 years. That is a preexisting condition.

Let there be no doubt: Republicans will always make sure that patients are able to get insurance regardless of their medical condition.

Senator LOEFFLER's plan also recognizes the need for more insurance choices. Americans need the coverage that works for them and their families. It should be available, affordable, and appropriate for them—what they need, not what the government says they have to have. Families need more options.

Association health plans let small businesses and community organizations come together with the buying power of large corporations. This helps lower the cost of care. Main Street, I believe, deserves the same opportunity to buy insurance as Wall Street, and that is what Senator LOEFFLER is proposing.

Her plan also lets consumers save more of their own money to pay for healthcare. Right now, as a result of the Obama healthcare law, Americans can only use a health savings account when it is tied to a high deductible healthcare plan. My colleague from Georgia wants to expand these accounts for anyone with health insurance coverage regardless of their type of insurance plan.

Everyone knows over the last year—since the Obama healthcare law was passed—that deductibles have continued to keep climbing. We need to give families relief by letting them save more of their own money tax-free through a health savings account. That way, families could use their money to pay for deductibles and other kinds of healthcare expenses that right now they are not allowed to do.

As a doctor, one thing in particular that I strongly support, of course, is direct primary care. We have it running successfully in my home State of Wyoming. That is when someone pays your healthcare provider a flat monthly fee instead of a fee every time you visit the doctor or the nurse or the nurse practitioner.

Consumers like this arrangement. They like it because it takes the uncertainty out of a doctor's visit. They always know what they are going to pay month to month to month. Providers

like it because they get to focus on patients over all of the paperwork that is so often required by insurance companies.

I talk to doctors who are tired of practicing medicine and want to retire: What is it you don't like? They love taking care of patients, but they hate the paperwork that comes with it, so often related to the law, the mandates, and the things that happen with trying to comply with the insurance paperwork.

A lot more can be done, and we know this as a result of coronavirus in terms of providing healthcare using telemedicine. Especially, Madam President, in your home State and mine, where there are great distances and lots of rural communities, it is a great opportunity for people to receive healthcare from a distance, using the newest technology of the day.

I think we have seen much more about telemedicine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients have tried it. They like it. The providers I have talked to around the State of Wyoming like it a lot.

There have been issues in the past, though—the issues of how to reimburse and how many visits and the distance. And did they need to come into the office? Would it be covered by insurance? Would it be covered by Medicare? Would it be covered by Medicaid? All of these are issues—hassles—for the patient and the provider, but, to me, telemedicine is now here to stay.

These direct primary care practices truly have been on the leading edge of telemedicine because they didn't have to worry about insurance company reimbursements based on the number of face-to-face visits. They could just visit and talk to the patient using telemedicine.

Speaking of COVID-19, this plan also ensures that we continue fighting back against this virus. There is tremendous news today about the vaccines—two vaccines, one that is 90 percent effective and one that is 94 percent effective.

As a doctor, I will tell you, these are breakthroughs. These are modern-day miracles of medicine. If you think about it, not that long ago Dr. Fauci said that if we could get a vaccine that was 50 percent effective, that would be tremendous. But we are talking much, much higher rates of effectiveness than that.

My colleague in her proposal also calls for focus on something we can all support, and that is making drugs and personal protective equipment here in the United States—producing here at home in America. We need to bring the manufacturing of these critical supplies back to our own communities, certainly back to our country. Never again—never again—should our patients and healthcare workers be held hostage by China or any other nation.

Senator LOEFFLER knows that Americans should not be the sole payers for the innovation that supports the rest

of the world. My colleague's plan reinforces the fact that our trade policies must reflect when countries freeloader off of American innovation.

Finally, she wants to make sure that pharmacy discounts benefit the patients, not large pharmacies' so-called benefit managers. This is a common-sense legislative proposal that will mean lower drug prices for patients who have to take expensive medications. When discounts go directly to patients, Americans will see much lower costs when they pay at the pharmacy counter.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of what is in Senator LOEFFLER's proposal. But I am sure that in the days ahead, the Senate will have a chance to hear more about her important work on healthcare. I look forward to continuing to work with her and all of my colleagues as Republicans get these important policies enacted into law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. I yield back the rest of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Toby Crouse, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas, shall be brought to a close?

Mr. JOHNSON. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea," and the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN), and the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 235 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Barrasso	Fischer	Perdue
Blackburn	Gardner	Portman
Blunt	Hawley	Risch
Boozman	Hoever	Roberts
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Burr	Inhofe	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Rubio
Cassidy	Kennedy	Sasse
Collins	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Shelby
Cotton	Loeffler	Sullivan
Cramer	Manchin	Thune
Crapo	McConnell	Tillis
Cruz	McSally	Toomey
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Enzi	Murkowski	Young
Ernst	Paul	

NAYS—43

Baldwin	Hirono	Schatz
Bennet	Jones	Schumer
Blumenthal	Kaine	Shaheen
Booker	King	Sinema
Brown	Klobuchar	Smith
Cantwell	Leahy	Stabenow
Cardin	Markey	Tester
Casey	Menendez	Udall
Coons	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Peters	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Reed	Wyden
Hassan	Rosen	
Heinrich	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—7

Alexander	Graham	Scott (FL)
Carper	Grassley	
Feinstein	Harris	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action in relation to the Crouse nomination.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I was unable to attend the rollcall vote No. 227 on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Aileen Cannon to the United States Southern District of Florida. Had I been able to attend, I would have voted to oppose cloture.

I was unable to attend the roll call vote No. 228 on the motion to confirm the nomination of Aileen Cannon to the United States Southern District of Florida. Had I been able to attend, I would have voted to oppose confirmation.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. SINEMA. Madam President, I was necessarily absent, but had I been present would have voted yes on rollcall vote 225, on the Motion to Invoke Cloture on the nomination of James Ray Knepp II to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

I was necessarily absent, but had I been present would have voted yes on rollcall vote 226, on the Confirmation of James Ray Knepp II to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

RECOGNIZING THE BICENTENNIAL OF TOURMALINE IN MAINE

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, this year, in addition to celebrating the bicentennial of the State of Maine, we are also commemorating the bicentennial of the first major find in North America of the treasured semiprecious stone tourmaline in the mountains of western Maine. It is a fascinating historical coincidence that the State of Maine and the discovery of its official State gemstone share the same anniversary.

Maine became our Nation's 23rd State on March 15, 1820. In late autumn of that year, college students Elijah Hamlin and Ezekiel Holmes were pursuing their studies in mineralogy on an expedition to Mount Mica in Paris, ME. As they headed down the mountain at sunset, they spotted a vivid green sparkle amid the tangled roots of a fallen tree. The beautiful crystal was an exciting find, but the encroaching darkness prevented further exploration.

Their plan to continue their search the next morning was cancelled by an overnight snowfall that blanketed the ground until spring. When the two students did return months later, they were astonished by the amount and variety of the crystals among the rocky ledges. The many shades of green, red, white, and yellow translucent stones they found explain why the word "tourmaline," which comes from an ancient language of Sri Lanka, roughly translates to "many colors."

News of the discovery spread, and the region soon became the foremost hunting grounds in North America for these remarkable gems, rivaling famous sites in South America and Asia. Among the early Maine rock hounds was Elijah Hamlin's younger brother Hannibal, who four decades later would serve as President Lincoln's first Vice President.

Today, Maine tourmaline is treasured by jewelers, artists, and collectors. Our distinctive watermelon tourmaline, which combines pink, white, and green in one stone, is especially prized. Residents and visitors alike delight in searching for these gorgeous stones amid the marvelous scenery of our western mountains.

The Hamlin Necklace, containing stones of various colors from the original find, can be seen at the Harvard