

and working with the staff, a full day of work the next day.

That didn't happen once in a while. That happened almost every weekend because, as those of us involved in agriculture know, it either rains too much or not enough; the Sun either doesn't shine enough or it shines too much.

The truth is, Trecia had to juggle all of those balls in the air to make sure that everything got done, to make sure that I was able to do my job as a Senator, that I was able to meet with those constituents, that I was able to meet with those trade groups that were out there, and that I was able to meet with different businesses around the State of Montana and then also have time enough to be able to operate the farm. She did it, and she did it with a smile on her face. The reason that is important is because sometimes those calls didn't come at 5 in the afternoon; sometimes those calls came at midnight Montana time, which, incidentally, is 2 in the morning here, and she always answered the phone—always—and she was always there with a solution to any problem I might have. It made life so much easier. That is why, when I hired Trecia McEvoy, it was the best hire I have ever made in my nearly 14 years in this body.

Trecia, when I hired her, was already a seasoned veteran. She spent more than 15 years scheduling for Senator Jim Jeffords before I was able to hire her. We asked her former colleagues in Jeffords' office to reminisce on their time working with Trecia. One of them was something that is perfectly Trecia McEvoy. The quote goes like this: Trecia was a fierce keeper of the gate and protector of Senator Jeffords. The staff didn't worry too much about Jim getting mad at us but, rather, Trecia getting mad at us. Whether she was protecting his time with an important dignitary, protecting his popcorn and his frozen yogurt lunches, or making sure that Jim wore his Senate softball uniform underneath his suit to hit the field after the vote, she never missed a beat.

Coincidentally, here in the Senate, she met her husband Jeff when she worked in Jeffords' office. Some of you may know Jeff. He is one of the Senate's longest serving photographers. Jeff was an Army veteran, serving from 1981 to 1989. Coming to the Senate after his retirement, where he has been ever since, he worked his way up, holding positions as official photographer, lead photographer, photographic services supervisor, and lastly, branch manager.

Jeff and Trecia still have—at least until the pandemic hit—lunch in the Dirksen cafeteria every single day. Between the two of them, they had two kids, Zach and Ian. It has been a privilege of my lifetime to watch those kids grow up, to go to an occasional hockey game—something that I know nothing about—and have Trecia tell me how the sport works.

Look, it is never easy when you have somebody who sits right outside the

door of your office—usually the first person you see when you come into the office, and it is usually the last person you see when you leave it. But Trecia was a pro. She is a pro.

Today I should feel sad, but I don't. I actually feel very happy for her because she gets to retire, and she gets to move up to New Hampshire. I think, if she is watching in Washington, DC, right now, she is probably sitting on cardboard boxes full of clothes or dishes or whatever it might be because my guess is, as of tomorrow, she will probably be in New Hampshire in short order. But the truth is, she will be able to go up there and enjoy life and look back at her time here in the Senate and understand that she has done a job well done. I would just say that the next chapter in her life, I have no doubt, will be just as exciting as the last one.

Trecia said: I remember there was a day—she told me that when she retires, she will look up at the dome and no longer feel a sense of wonder. I don't believe that is true. I think now that she is retired, she will look up at this dome that we all work under and think of the incredible stories and the incredible experiences and the incredible people, that she was able to enrich their lives and make life better for them.

Even though, Trecia, you are going to be a shot up north in New Hampshire, you will always be a part of my team, Team Tester. And I will tell you that Sharla and my kids and my staff and I thank you for everything you have done. Hopefully you won't be a stranger. Hopefully you will come back on occasion, come into the office and tell us what we are doing wrong and what we are doing right, because you are the best.

I yield my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WICKER. 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 TAYLOR B. MCNEEL

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the nomination of Taylor Brantley McNeel for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. We will vote in a few minutes on the first vote for this outstanding nominee, the cloture vote, and then I have every reason to believe that tomorrow, this outstanding candidate will be confirmed for elevation to the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Mississippi.

Sometimes when we vote, those confirmation votes are party-line votes. I think, happily, many times they are bipartisan. Based on conversations across the aisle, I have every reason to

believe that the vote on Taylor McNeel will, in fact, be bipartisan. I certainly hope it will be because his support back home in Mississippi is certainly bipartisan and multicultural because he is such an outstanding individual and such an outstanding attorney and an outstanding member of our State community.

Taylor McNeel's life has been marked by excellence at every point. Of course, he is a great lawyer. He is a partner in the law firm of Brunini, Grantham, Grower & Hewes, where he oversees the gulf coast office for this large law firm. Taylor McNeel has led a distinguished career in the firm, with extensive experience in both bench and jury trials in Federal and State courts. He has served as lead counsel for numerous appeals to the Mississippi Supreme Court, the Mississippi Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. His clients include individuals, government entities, and businesses covering a vast range of law.

I believe Senators should be impressed also by his work on behalf of disadvantaged members of our community back home. He maintains a strong pro bono practice, representing clients who would not normally be able to afford legal services. I think he is to be commended for that.

His academic credentials are impeccable. He was a cum laude graduate from the University of Mississippi, where he received his undergraduate degree. As an undergraduate, he was an outstanding athlete as well as leader. He was a member of the Ole Miss Rebel football team and was elected senior class president of that outstanding university.

He went on to receive his juris doctor degree cum laude from the University of Mississippi School of Law, where he served on the Mississippi Law Journal.

Taylor McNeel has been widely recognized as a young lawyer to watch. He has been named a Mid-South Rising Star in business litigation for 8 years in a row and has been listed 3 years in a row in the 40 & Under Hot List for the United States in benchmark litigation. Is it any wonder, then, that he has received a unanimous "qualified" rating by the American Bar Association? Of course, we know that the highest rating a candidate for district judge can receive is the rating of "qualified," and the fact that this was done unanimously by the committee—it just doesn't get any better than that for a candidate for district judge.

It is important to note also that Mr. McNeel is an outstanding and active member in his community and is widely respected there. He serves on the school board of the Pascagoula-Gautier School District. I might add that is a racially diverse school district. He is an elder in his church, First Presbyterian Church in Pascagoula, and he has been a member of the Rotary Club of Biloxi.

Pascagoula is in Jackson County, where he is an outstanding citizen. Biloxi is in Harrison County, and he is a

leader there. They are two of our most populous counties in the State of Mississippi, and he stands head and shoulders above the crowd in both of those.

He has been president of the Harrison County Bar Association and holds memberships in the American Inns of Court, the Federal Bar Association, Fifth Circuit Bar Association, and the Federalist Society.

Taylor and his wife Jessica have three children: Mollie, age 10; Taylor, age 7; and Brantley Rose, born on the 2nd day of this month.

He has his hands full. I think he will be able to balance being a dad as well as a district judge. He has outstanding qualifications in the academic field, the judicial field, and his personal qualifications are absolutely out of this world. I am confident he will serve the Southern District of Mississippi and our country well if confirmed.

We will vote on cloture in a few moments. Again, I am sincerely hoping and believe we will—based on conversations—have a bipartisan vote, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes on the confirmation of Taylor McNeel.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see nobody within 15 or 20 feet of me, so I will take the mask off, and I appreciate the fact the distinguished Presiding Officer recognized who it was even with the mask.

I have a couple of things that concern me. I was going through the history and looking at transitions between Presidents. I was struck by—even Presidents who did not like their successor—how hard they worked to make sure that everything was done properly for the good of the country. No matter how they might feel about themselves personally, they set the country first and foremost. I contrast that with what is happening now.

Former Vice President, former U.S. Senator—I served with him—Joe Biden, got the most votes of any Democratic nominee for President in the history of this country—millions more than what President Trump got. He has an insurmountable lead in certified electoral votes. Yet the President, for weeks, refused even to carry out the law that we all voted for—Republicans and Democrats alike—to provide for transition whenever there is a transition, a law that was used quickly when President Trump was elected. Even though Hillary Clinton had millions more votes than he did, she conceded the election, and within a day, the transition began.

The idea is, whoever is President must know what is going on. Certainly, the distinguished Presiding Officer, like all of us, has access to and gets intelligence briefings on what is happening around the world. I think it discloses nothing to say we live in per-

ilous times, and there are decisions any President must make, even if it is 5 minutes after they are inaugurated, as was the potential when President Obama was inaugurated the first time. He actually had talking points to alert people to clear the malls in case there was an attack.

Instead, today is only the first day that President-Elect Biden is getting the Presidential briefing. Vice President-Elect KAMALA HARRIS, of course, has the advantage as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee to have a lot of that material anyway, but now they both do.

But we look so foolish in the eyes of the rest of the world. We lecture dictatorships when they have rigged an election so they can stay. We lecture them for doing that. We lecture those people who refuse to give up their office. Yet now they see the United States, the leading democratic country in the world, the country that always espouses democracy, saying: Well, we are not going to follow our Constitution. We are not going to follow our laws. We will allow a lot of tweets from the incumbent, but we are not going to follow our law.

What kind of example is that?

Then the President does even worse by saying: Well, I am getting these calls from all these world leaders saying to stick it out. But, of course, when asked “Well, who were they?” suddenly he can’t seem to remember who it was who called—if there were any such calls; I suspect there weren’t.

Let’s stop the charade. Let’s make more of an effort to have a smooth transition. There are enough things that face this country. We should not have, for the first time in our history, this kind of foolishness.

I applaud those few members of the Republican Party who have been honest enough to say: It is over. We know it is over.

I think when you go back in history, when Richard Nixon faced impeachment and ultimate conviction here in the Senate, some of the most respected Republican Senators went down to see him quietly—people like Hugh Scott, the Republican leader, whom I got to know well, and Barry Goldwater, “Mr. Conservative,” whom I got to know well. They went down—not with any happiness in doing this, as one of them told me subsequently there was actually sorrow in their hearts—to tell the President he had to leave; the time had come.

The President did, and the Republicans and Democrats came together to help install the next President, Jerry Ford, and the next Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller. The two of them became the first President and Vice President never to have been elected. Jerry Ford and Nelson Rockefeller were the first President and Vice President never to be elected but to be appointed. That was about the time I came to the Senate.

I remember hearing Republicans and Democrats alike saying: We might not

like to say what happened, but we knew the government had to keep going, and we had to show credibility to the rest of the world. So long as we pretend that we have a Presidency by tweet, we don’t show that integrity to the rest of the world.

I was there for the inauguration of President Trump. Even though I had a different candidate and voted for her, Secretary and former Senator Hillary Clinton, I was there—as was Secretary Clinton and her husband, former President Clinton, and outgoing President Obama and outgoing Vice President Biden—to show the world that we have continuity. Even though there is a vast difference of opinion, we have continuity.

That is not the image we are showing now. With everything that is happening, whether it is in Iran or, economically, with Brexit and the United Kingdom or a COVID epidemic around the world, we, the United States of America, should show unity, at least under our Constitution.

Of course, Republicans should be supporting Republicans and, of course, Democrats should be supporting Democrats. But the one thing we should all be supportive of is our Constitution and our laws.

We stand down there—the proudest moments of my life were standing down here and taking my oath to uphold the Constitution as United States Senator, just as I did when I became President pro tempore. I did it to uphold the Constitution of the United States, not the Constitution of the Democratic Party, not the Constitution of the Republican Party, but the Constitution of the United States of America.

Let’s get on with the transition. Let’s make America strong again. Let’s do what is necessary to be done to fight this COVID epidemic.

In that regard, we have two matters that should be the most important matters before us. One is getting an omnibus because, after all, in a couple of weeks, funding for the United States of America will run out, and we don’t want to have one of those foolish shutdowns that we had before that cost the taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. Only four of us—Senator SHELBY and myself and our counterparts in the House just down the hall—met in my office and worked out a bipartisan resolution and passed the spending bill so that we could put the government back in order. Ironically, it was exactly what we had offered weeks before. For some reason the White House didn’t want to accept it, and billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money were lost.

Now we have a life-or-death issue that goes beyond even the spending, and that is COVID. The House of Representatives, back in June, I believe it was, passed the Heroes Act to have money, equipment, and so forth for those who are suffering because of the COVID epidemic, like the small stores, inns, restaurants, and so forth in my