

This is the low-hanging fruit of climate action. This is an opportunity for this country to make a statement internationally, to make a statement to our people, and to do something about the most serious environmental problem we face.

Every day that goes by, it gets more expensive to deal with. Every day that goes by, it is going to be more difficult for our people, the impacts are going to be more catastrophic, and the impacts are going to be more difficult in terms of what we have to spend to deal with it.

So let's spend relatively little now to eliminate one of the most serious risks. It is not minor. It is a very significant part of the climate issue, and it is one that we can do at a relatively low price, with not a heavy hand of regulation but commonsense regulation. And we can do something important for the American people and, indeed, for the people of the entire world.

This is an important vote this afternoon. I hope it is a resounding vote. It should be. It should be a resounding vote to say to the world and to say to the people of this country: We are on your side. We understand there is a problem heading for us, and we are going to act to deal with it.

This is our responsibility. It is why we are here, and we have the capability to do this starting today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I think I will get done before, but, in case, I ask unanimous consent to be able to finish my statement before the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF SAMANTHA POWER

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the nomination of Ambassador Samantha Power to be our next Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Ambassador Power's qualifications for this position are beyond dispute. Her lifelong commitment to protecting human rights and preventing global atrocities, combined with the foreign policy experience she gained during the Obama administration, make her impeccably qualified for this role.

I want to highlight, in particular, her leadership on the international effort to end genocide. Our struggle against these horrific crimes is ongoing and unrelenting. Like Ambassador Power, I was proud to see the Biden administration formally recognize the Armenian genocide, a recognition by the U.S. Government that was long overdue.

Ambassador Power's intellect, energy, and focus will be an enormous asset to USAID in the Administration's efforts to end poverty around the world, help victims of conflict, improve food security, and build the kind of resilience that ultimately benefits the

security and prosperity of the American people.

This work is not easy, but it is exactly the sort of work that President Biden described in his inaugural address when he spoke of the United States as "a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress, and security."

It is also the work we must do to confront the immense crises we face around the world. Many of the conflicts Ambassador Power contended with during her time at the United Nations continue today. New conflicts, as we know, are brewing in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Burma, and creating hundreds of thousands of innocent victims and refugees.

Climate change is increasing food insecurity, intensifying natural resource scarcity, and beginning to drive mass migration.

And, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic is an ever-evolving threat, and its proliferation around the world will continue to endanger our public health here at home. As long as there is a COVID-19 virus anywhere, it can be everywhere. We cannot hermetically seal off our Nation. That is why this particular role of USAID is going to be increasingly important.

As we reengage with our partners in the world to meet these challenges, Ambassador Power will play a critical role. I am confident her experience, tenacity, and drive to build a better, more prosperous, peaceful world are exactly what USAID and our country need at this moment.

I urge all of my colleagues to support Ambassador Power's successful confirmation.

With that, I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

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 the debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 61, Samantha Power, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

Charles E. Schumer, Mazie Hirono, Ron Wyden, Jack Reed, Benjamin L. Cardin, Patrick J. Leahy, Michael F. Bennet, Tim Kaine, Christopher Murphy, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher A. Coons, Cory A. Booker, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Chris Van Hollen, Sherrod Brown, Edward J. Markey, Bernard Sanders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it sense of the Senate that Samantha Power, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 28, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 173 Leg.]

YEAS—67

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Risch
Blumenthal	Hirono	Romney
Blunt	Johnson	Rosen
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Sasse
Burr	King	Schatz
Capito	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Lujan	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Collins	Markey	Stabenow
Coons	McConnell	Tester
Cornyn	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Crapo	Moran	Warnock
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wicker
Fischer	Osoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young
Graham	Peters	
Hassan	Portman	

NAYS—28

Barrasso	Hagerty	Rubio
Blackburn	Hawley	Scott (FL)
Boozman	Hoeben	Scott (SC)
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Sullivan
Cassidy	Inhofe	Thune
Cotton	Kennedy	Tillis
Cruz	Lankford	Toomey
Daines	Lee	Tuberville
Ernst	Lummis	
Grassley	Marshall	

NOT VOTING—5

Cantwell	Paul	Shelby
Cramer	Rounds	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 67, the nays are 28.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Samantha Power, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the

postcloture time on the Power nomination expire at 3:30 p.m. today, and that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that following disposition of the nomination, the Senate resume legislative session and vote on the passage of calendar No. 48, S.J. Res. 14, and that if passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at 3:30 p.m., the Senate will vote on confirmation of Samantha Power to be Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and on passage of the joint resolution of disapproval regarding the methane rule.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF SAMANTHA POWER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as I have said many times in the past, Presidents should be given a good deal of discretion when choosing their political appointees, and so long as their nominees are qualified and do not obstruct the advice and consent process, the Senate should not stand in the way of their confirmation.

After all, Presidents are ultimately responsible for the actions of their administration. And if the buck truly stops at the Resolute Desk, they need to be able to trust their subordinates to get the job done.

That being said, I now come to the point of my coming to the floor; that I must vote no on the nomination of Samantha Power to be Director of USAID.

On February 18, I sent a letter to Ms. Power asking questions regarding emails that came out of her office during her time serving as U.N. Ambassador.

Heavily redacted versions of those emails obtained by my office appear to suggest that Ms. Power's staff may have been working behind the scenes to remove the Islamic Relief Agency from the U.S. Treasury Department's sanctions list.

That organization was placed on the sanctions list for what? Funneling money to terrorist groups, and, thus, removing it would allow that organization to receive private donations as well as taxpayer funds.

In her letter responding to my questions, Ms. Power claimed that she was not working to take the Islamic Relief Agency off the sanctions list. She further claimed that the emails in question were part of an effort to challenge false claims made by the Islamic Relief Agency at the U.N. denying their involvement in terrorist financing.

In order to verify her claims, I have requested, on multiple occasions, that she provide unredacted copies of the emails and complete answers to the questions that I posed in my original letter.

But after 3 months, all I have received is a collection of public press releases. I have not received the emails I requested. I have not received answers to my questions.

Normally, political appointees and nominees wait until after they are confirmed to start ignoring congressional inquiries, but in this case, it seems the Executive branch has decided advice and consent is going to be a mere formality, and there is no need to wait. This seems to be a pattern.

For instance, I asked the Secretary of HHS a number of specific questions for the record as part of the Finance Committee vetting process. I received responses that didn't even try to answer the substance of my questions.

I also asked Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to reconcile some conflicting information on her House financial disclosures and responses to questions for the record for the Energy Committee about her taxes. They weren't gotcha questions either. In fact, it was probably innocent mistakes on her part, if anything, but Secretary Haaland declined to respond at all.

Maybe the White House figures simply that they don't need Republican votes so they don't need to answer even routine vetting questions from Republicans, but then the White House can't blame Republicans for voting no on their nominees when they ignore our oversight questions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

S.J. RES. 14

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, the methane problem is not a new one. It has quickly and drastically warmed our planet since the Industrial Revolution, and today it accounts for one-quarter of global warming.

We have no time to lose. In the short term, methane is more than 80 times more powerful and damaging than its better known cousin named CO₂.

And while we have made more progress reducing our carbon dioxide levels, methane pollution has continued to surge in the background. Even last year, with more cars off the road and many stuck in their homes, methane pollution levels just kept rising.

And it rose in record amounts. In 2020, we saw the largest ever annual increase in methane emissions. If we continue to fail to act, methane pollution from the oil and gas industry is projected to cause as much near-term global warming as 260 coal-fired powerplants every year by 2025.

This is a crisis brought on by humanity, but, thankfully, it is one that we can solve as well by humanity. We have the technology and we understand the science and we need now to summon the political will and the regulatory leadership in order to solve this methane problem.

Last week, I sent a letter to President Biden asking him to lead the world in developing a bold domestic methane strategy, and although the

administration's economy-wide goals for greenhouse gas emissions are a good baseline start, we need robust and specific targets for methane.

By voting today to rescind the Trump-era attacks on methane regulations, we can protect the Clean Air Act instead of undermining it. By reinstating strong standards, we can protect public health and create new jobs in detecting and repairing leaks. By taking a stand today for environmental progress and good governance, we can begin to repair the immense damage done by Donald Trump. He was an enemy of science, a roadblock to progress, and a willing saboteur of American jobs and health as long as he could pursue his anti-environmental agenda.

Today, we have an opportunity to recommit to climate action and to environmental justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has helped expose the deep, systemic, and historic injustices our communities of color and low-income neighborhoods continue to face, communities like those in Chelsea, MA, which has been affected by both poor air quality and some of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the State and the Nation, or Weymouth, MA, which grapples daily with the public health and public safety threat of a natural gas compressor station.

Big oil and big gas corporations have used places like Weymouth as a way station for pollution, without fear of reprisal for emissions of methane and toxic compounds. This week, we can stand up for justice for these communities instead of idly standing by.

By passing this resolution on the floor this afternoon, we can make real progress for the climate, for our global community, and for all Americans who breathe different air because of their race, their ZIP Code, or their income level.

In Massachusetts, Ralph Waldo Emerson said that health is the first wealth. Today's vote is a decisive victory for our families. It will give the Biden administration the tools it needs to shut in this methane for a very inexpensive cost to the oil and gas industry, providing real benefits to the health of our planet and the health of families in our country. As a result, I urge an "aye" vote on that CRA.

NOMINATION OF SAMANTHA POWER

Mr. President, I would like to speak on behalf of the nominee of the Biden administration to become the Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID.

He has a great nominee, Samantha Power, for this job. As noted in a New Yorker profile of her, Samantha's last name, Power, comes from the Irish "de Paor" meaning "of the poor." Fittingly, she has dedicated her entire life in service of others, using her razor-sharp intelligence and fierce advocacy as a journalist, activist, and diplomat to stand with the world's voiceless masses, all while simultaneously advancing U.S. interests by building bonds in every corner of the world.