

Crapo	Lee	Rosen
Duckworth	Luján	Rounds
Durbin	Lummis	Sanders
Feinstein	Manchin	Schatz
Fischer	Markey	Schumer
Gillibrand	McCconnell	Sinema
Graham	Menendez	Smith
Hassan	Merkley	Stabenow
Heinrich	Moran	Sullivan
Hickenlooper	Murkowski	Tester
Hirono	Murphy	Thune
Hyde-Smith	Murray	Tillis
Inhofe	Ossoff	Van Hollen
Johnson	Padilla	Warner
Kaine	Paul	Warnock
Kelly	Peters	Warren
Kennedy	Portman	Whitehouse
King	Reed	Wicker
Klobuchar	Risch	Wyden
Leahy	Romney	Young

NAYS—21

Barrasso	Ernst	Rubio
Blackburn	Grassley	Sasse
Braun	Hagerty	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Hawley	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Hoeven	Shelby
Cruz	Lankford	Toomey
Daines	Marshall	Tuberville

NOT VOTING—1

Shaheen

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 16.

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 Miguel A. Cardona, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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 Executive Calendar No. 16, Miguel A. Cardona, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

Charles E. Schumer, Cory A. Booker, Jon Ossoff, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Christopher A. Coons, Sheldon Whitehouse, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Kirsten

E. Gillibrand, Tim Kaine, Tammy Baldwin, Ron Wyden, Mazie Hirono, Tammy Duckworth, Sherrod Brown.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call for the cloture motion be waived.

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

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS J. VILSACK

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wanted to talk a little bit about the vote I just took here with regard to our Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Vilsack, who is now the new Secretary or on his way to becoming the new Secretary.

You know, what I have tried to do when looking at nominees is I typically kind of look at three different questions: Do they have experience for the job, the experience necessary for the job, do they have views that I believe will help the country and in particular help my State, and do they care about the people they will be impacting? So that is a bit of a three-part test.

I have tried to work with a lot of the new nominees in the Biden administration. I voted for a number of them, most of them. As a matter of fact, I introduced Secretary Austin at his confirmation hearing. I got to know him many years ago when I was a marine and he was an Army officer, a two-star general.

You know, I will say to my friends, colleagues, constituents back home who say: Hey, Senator, you know, when the Trump administration put forward their nominees, you usually had kind of a party-line vote.

A lot of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, my Democratic friends, would vote no, no, no, no.

Why don't you do that? Well, I don't think it is good for the country; that is why I don't do that. I am against some but I have been supportive of many, and I am not sure the way in which it worked with the previous administration was best for our Nation.

So certainly Secretary Vilsack passes the first two parts of that test I was talking about. Clearly he has the experience. He was the Secretary of Ag for 8 years under President Obama and Vice President Biden. Certainly he has views particularly with regard to farm country. You saw the strong vote he had there with regard to helping the ag sector. I am sure he is a patriot, of course. He cares about our country. But it was the third question—does he care about the people he will be impacting?—that I have had some serious hesitation on.

Mr. President, I will talk a little bit about, you know, a lot of our different economies throughout the country. Our States have been hit hard by this pandemic. I would say that my State's economy has been hit really hard. When you look at what drives a lot of the Alaska economy: the energy sector, oil, gas, mining, the tourism sector, the fisheries, commercial fishery sector—I like to call Alaska the superpower of seafood. Over 60 percent of all seafood harvested in America comes from the waters of the great State of Alaska, the most sustainable, best managed fishery probably in the world but a huge driver of our economy.

Also, there is the issue of access to our lands. Sixty-six percent of Alaska is Federal land. We need access to help have a strong economy. It is an issue that the Presiding Officer probably doesn't have to worry about, being from Connecticut, but in Alaska, access to land is huge.

In the last administration, we made a lot of progress on these issues for our economy, on oil and gas, ANWR, the NPRA, access to those lands, legislation by the Congress. Our tourism sector had been doing great. Our commercial fishing sector had been doing great. We even made progress on other access issues, like the Tongass, something that for 25 years Democrats and Republicans, whether Senators from Alaska, whether Governors from Alaska, were trying to get access to those lands. It is really important, and we were able to do that.

So there was progress, and then the pandemic that has hurt everybody. It certainly hurt the energy sector. It certainly hurt, crushed the tourism sector. Last year, Alaska was going to have 1.5 million people show up in our State with regard to tourism, a new record just on the cruise ships, but none of them showed up because of the pandemic. The commercial fishing sector also has had a really rough time with this pandemic—markets, international markets, markets domestically.

So I am very concerned about my State's economy, about working families, and about the average Alaskan who is struggling right now. The new policies put forward by this administration have been shockingly negative as it relates to my State. One month in, particularly in the energy sector, every day we are waking up to a new edict saying: Men and women who produce energy in America, who produce energy in Alaska, sorry, you are not favored anymore. You are not viewed in a positive light anymore.

It is a real, real, real concern. Hundreds, if not thousands of jobs in my State during a recession are at risk.

So these are some of the issues that I raised in my discussions with Secretary Vilsack, in particular our commercial fishing sector.

In the previous administration, under the USDA, the Secretary of Agriculture helped implement a new trade

relief program for fishermen. Huge progress. Hugely important. Just the way the farmers were getting this kind of relief with regard to trade and markets that have been destroyed by the pandemic, the Secretary of Agriculture undertook a new program for the farmers of the sea, for the fishermen who are being negatively impacted the same way that our farmers on the land were.

This is an issue that I raised with the Secretary on the importance of moving forward, continuing that, and to be honest, there didn't seem to be a lot of interest. I was kind of shocked, but there didn't seem to be a lot of interest, and I was concerned. I am concerned.

Similarly, this progress we made with regard to the Tongass, access to the largest national forest in the country that is under USDA management—something Alaskans have been working on in a bipartisan way for 25 years. There didn't seem to be a lot of interest from the Secretary on that either.

So these are two issues hugely important to my State, hugely important to my constituents, hugely important to try to get Alaska out of a really deep recession where a lot of families are worried. And I got the sense that the Secretary just wasn't that interested. I really hope I am wrong. I really hope I am wrong.

So I plan on trying to work with him. You know, he had a strong, very strong bipartisan vote, but every now and then, if you really think the people you represent are not going to be given a lot of attention when they need it, it becomes a harder vote. It becomes a harder vote. He obviously has got strong bipartisan support, but I sure hope that when he becomes Secretary of Agriculture, he cares as much about the farmers of the sea, where we have made progress on, as he does about farmers on the land. I didn't see that in my meeting with him and I hope I am wrong and that is why I voted the way I did.

I also voted the way I did as it relates to this issue of access to the Tongass. Again, it is a huge issue to my State, a very bipartisan issue for my State. And, again, I hope that the Secretary and his team look at it as something that can help the economy of Alaska while protecting our environment, which, of course, we care about.

But these are the reasons that I voted the way I did, and I hope that my concerns are going to be proved to be unfounded. I am going to continue to advocate for my constituents in the way that I think is going to be very important as we try and get through these challenging times, particularly the Alaska Tongass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, today, the HELP Committee considered the nomination of Xavier Becerra,

our former House colleague, to head the Department of Health and Human Services, and tomorrow the Finance Committee will take their turn at examining his record.

It is hard to think of a nominee more notorious for actively seeking out ways to undermine religious freedom and our religious liberty. His contempt for those whose beliefs differ from his own is well documented, and, in many cases, his positions on those issues are far more radical than those held by the majority in his own party.

He supports abortion up to the moment of birth, and, in 2003, actively opposed the partial-birth abortion ban. He cosponsored legislation that would have forced religious employers to provide insurance that covers the morning-after pill, in spite of their mainstream and sincerely held religious beliefs. Bear in mind I said the legislation would have forced—not an option—forced religious employers to provide insurance that covered the morning-after pill.

In fact, Mr. Becerra has been so antagonistic toward fundamental constitutional principles that you could almost forget he doesn't have the public health experience most Americans would expect the Secretary of Health and Human Services to possess. In fact, he has no meaningful experience in healthcare at all—zero, none, not in public health or large-scale logistical operations or in any other area that might be helpful as we navigate our way out of a global pandemic. That is right. He has no healthcare experience.

This lack of experience, combined with his desire to destroy those who disagree with him, places him among the most unqualified and dangerous nominees ever to come before the Senate for consideration, and I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing his confirmation.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, I wish that we could write off this nomination as an anomaly, but we can't. It is part of a pattern of behavior on the left that has destabilized our already fragile political discourse and convinced the American people that the Biden administration will prioritize their radical liberal agenda above the rights of the people they were elected to serve.

I have to tell you, I hear about this every single day as I am talking with Tennesseans. Since the earliest days of the Republic, our Union has managed to survive because of the people's willingness to return to our founding principles—those first principles upon which we stand.

However much that they disagreed, they knew that they were stronger united than they were divided. So they would come together in the public square. They would have robust, respectful debate. They would agree to disagree, but they respected the fact that they lived in a free country, and they could do this without fear of persecution, without fear of being ostracized, and without fear of losing a job.

Today, Americans are looking for that same commitment to unity. Oh, they heard about it during the inaugural address. Unity—we are going to work for unity. But what has happened is a cord of panic and fear has been struck in their hearts as they see Executive order after Executive order and as they see Executive orders that are preferencing other countries and not the U.S.A. And as they hear from the left words that are, We are not looking for unity; what we are looking for is you to submit to our agenda, conform to our way of doing things. What they are doing is leaving no room for discussion, even on issues of international importance.

For decades, the various schools of thought represented in this Chamber have advocated for different approaches to foreign relations. Some revere international bodies and sweeping multilateral agreements, and others approach these constructs with caution, prioritizing national sovereignty over surface-level diplomacy.

When former President Trump formally withdrew from the Paris climate accords in 2019, economists, business owners, and budget watchdogs all breathed a sigh of relief because they knew that adherence to the Paris climate accords would put the United States at a competitive disadvantage. This wasn't a partisan debate, mind you; this was U.S.-based companies—U.S.-based companies that were saying thank you for withdrawing because adhering to this, when other countries that are our competitors will not adhere, puts us at a disadvantage.

Now, with the climate accords, by 2035, we would have seen hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs, household electric bills go up as much as 20 percent, and an aggregate GDP free fall of \$2½ trillion. That is the cost. That is the cost of my way or the highway. That is the cost of putting other countries and their agenda ahead of us, the cost of their noncompliance.

Fast-forward to a little over a year later, and the Biden administration has thrown us back into the accords and back into that predicted economic free fall.

This week, I worked with my colleague Senator DAINES to introduce two pieces of legislation that will hopefully do a little bit of damage control on that issue.

The first is a bill that would prohibit taxpayer dollars from being used to rejoin the Paris Agreement. It makes sense. The reason it does is you are taking jobs away from U.S. employers. You are causing employees to become former employees or the unemployed. So it makes sense. If you want to do this, don't use taxpayer dollars. Don't make people pay for things that are going to take away their jobs.

The second is a resolution that would call on President Biden to submit the Paris Agreement to the Senate for approval. It makes sense. Where are treaties to come? Here. If you want unity,