

I urge my colleagues to join me in once again confirming her nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL WONG

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today, for me, in one particular respect, it is both a happy day but also a sad day.

With me on the floor is Mr. Michael Wong, to my right. Michael is my State director. I will come back to him in a second.

Also with us today is Michael's spouse, Jamie, in the Gallery. Jamie is not only Michael's spouse; she is in her own right a nationally known and locally renowned expert in special education.

Michael and Jamie have two children. I am going to read their full names and embarrass them: Mr. Thomas Miller Wong and Miss Julia Rose Wong. Thomas is 7. Julia is 5. They are both whip-smart. They are both future leaders of this country and, I hope, of Louisiana because I hope they will stay in my State. On top of that, Julia is quite the gymnast, and Thomas is a heck of a right fielder and a heck of a point guard and a heck of a quarterback. And they are both cool. They are both what "cool" looks like.

Now back to their dad.

I say it is a sad day for me because Michael is stepping down from government. It is a happy day because he is going to pursue some very exciting opportunities in the private sector. Michael has been working for the American people and the people of Louisiana for 16 years. Before he worked with me, he worked with Senator David Vitter, and he worked with Congressman STEVE SCALISE.

Michael has been my State director every single day that I have been a U.S. Senator. Let me tell you, it is a tough job, and it is one of the most important jobs.

As the Presiding Officer knows, we are here in Washington, and our people are back home. A State director has to make sure that their needs are being addressed back home and that their concerns are heard. The State director has to manage our local representatives and make sure that they are representing me in all of the different functions I need to do.

In Michael's case, he is also a valuable source of policy advice. I am going to miss that every day.

Michael has one of the best—maybe, the best—political minds in Louisiana. And he is a nice guy, much nicer than me. I just can't overstate how important he has been not just to me but to the people of Louisiana.

I said Michael has one of the best political minds. He has one of the best minds, period, not just in terms of policy and politics. But I want to mention the political mind in one respect.

Michael ran my reelection campaign. It was certainly the best-run campaign I have ever been involved in. I stepped back. Of course, I was the candidate, but as you know, Mr. President, the

candidate is only one small part of the campaign. Michael and his team—and I had a great team—they managed everything from the "get out the vote," their work on the analytics and data—I still don't understand how they did it—their vote targeting, and their TV commercials.

I had 13 different opponents, and I was expected to win in the first primary. Those weren't my expectations, necessarily. The media back home would repeat that repeatedly, and that put pressure on us. It is hard to do when you have got 13 opponents. That was Michael's responsibility.

I was just hoping to win, period. In the first primary, I was hoping just to get 50 percent plus 1. Michael managed the campaign that returned 62 percent. It was just breathtaking.

I have talked about Michael's policy chops. I have talked about his policy expertise. I have talked about his political acumen. I have talked about the fact that he cares about people. As an aside, a wise person once told me: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Michael understands that.

I mentioned Michael's beautiful family. He has also always made time for his kids and for Jamie, and I know there are times when it has been difficult. But let me tell you one particular attribute, among many, with respect to which I most respect Michael.

He will do the right thing, and he will tell his colleagues in a very tactful way, but a firm way, what they need to hear. He will tell me what I need to hear, not what I just want to hear.

I am not going to go into detail, but early in my first term, we, in our office, had what I will call a capital "T" tough, capital "I" issue. I will call it a tough issue. It involved our whole office. I thought I knew how to solve this capital "T" tough, capital "I" issue.

We basically had option A and option B, and I chose option A. Michael didn't agree with me. Some others in my office didn't agree with me, but they tried to implement option A, my option.

Michael told me from the beginning: Option A is not going to work. We need to go to option B, but I will try to implement option A.

But what I respect most about Michael is that he tried to implement my option A, but he never was frightened to look me in the eye and never was scared to look me in the eye—and I hope our pages are listening to this—and tell me, in a respectful but firm way: Kennedy, you are wrong. It is going to hurt you. It is going to hurt the people of Louisiana. We need to go to option B.

He kept coming back, and back, and back. Sometimes, I would get kind of angry and say: Michael, I have made a decision. Implement option A.

He would say: I am trying to, but I think we are wrong on this one.

Do you know what? He was right, and I was wrong. If Michael hadn't had less

courage and just said, "OK, the path of least resistance is just to agree with Kennedy; I know he is wrong, but, you know, let him find out for himself." I would have been hurt and the people of Louisiana would have been hurt.

That is not easy because all of us in this room have worked for somebody before. My first job in government was for a "reform" Governor. I was his legal counsel. Like Michael, he was very, very, very smart. God rest his soul. We used to say about Buddy: Often wrong, but never in doubt.

Buddy was a tough boss. Part of my job was to go to him and say: Governor, you are wrong on this.

Then I would cover up and take my whipping. Sometimes the Governor would change his mind, and sometimes he wouldn't. But he was very opinionated. That is one of the things I loved about Buddy.

That is a hard thing to do. It is hard to go to your boss in a firm, respectful way and say: Sir, I know I have told you before, but I am going to tell you again: This is a mistake. This is a mistake.

Michael did that. He avoided a lot of heartbreak—I don't want to overstate the case, but a lot of heartbreak—for me, for our office, and for the people of Louisiana. That is the kind of guy he is—a guy who doesn't think he has all the answers, but when he thinks he is right, by God, he will stick.

I am going to miss Michael. I am going to miss him every single day. I mean, he is not dying or anything. He is going to be around, OK. I know that. I am still going to call him and say: What do you think about this? What is going on?

But I wanted to rise today and thank Michael Wong, and thank, Jamie, and thank Thomas, and thank Julia for their years of service to the people of Louisiana. I wish them Godspeed. I wish them health. I wish them happiness. I can't wait to watch how Thomas's arm develops as a quarterback.

Thank you, Michael.

NOMINATION OF ORELIA ELETA MERCHANT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote to confirm Orelia Merchant to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Ms. Merchant received her B.S. from Dillard University, an M.A. from the College of William and Mary, and her J.D. from Tulane University Law School. She began her legal career as assistant regional counsel for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Ms. Merchant then served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Louisiana before transferring to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. She spent 17 years in the civil division of the U.S. Attorney's Office, handling matters involving asset forfeiture and various forms of fraud including environmental, healthcare, and mortgage fraud.

Since 2019, Ms. Merchant has worked in the New York Attorney General's

Office as chief deputy Attorney General for State counsel. In this role, she manages 250 attorneys and oversees more than 8,000 active cases, including prosecution and defense actions in State and Federal court on behalf of State officials, the State legislature, and State agencies. Nearly the entirety of Ms. Merchant's practice has involved litigation and the vast majority of her experience has been in Federal court. She is a seasoned litigator whose expertise will be an asset to the Eastern District of New York. The American Bar Association has rated Ms. Merchant as "qualified," and she has the strong support of Senators SCHUMER and GILLIBRAND.

I will be supporting her nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. KENNEDY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote begin immediately.

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

VOTE ON MERCHANT NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Merchant nomination?

Mr. HEINRICH. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 107 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Luján	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden

NAYS—48

Barrasso	Cassidy	Daines
Blackburn	Collins	Ernst
Boozman	Cornyn	Fischer
Braun	Cotton	Grassley
Britt	Cramer	Hagerty
Budd	Crapo	Hawley
Capito	Cruz	Hoeben

Hyde-Smith	Mullin	Scott (FL)
Johnson	Murkowski	Scott (SC)
Kennedy	Paul	Sullivan
Lankford	Ricketts	Thune
Lee	Risch	Tillis
Lummis	Romney	Tuberville
Marshall	Rounds	Vance
McConnell	Rubio	Wicker
Moran	Schmitt	Young

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

The nomination was confirmed.

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

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 debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 127, Wesley L. Hsu, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Wesley L. Hsu, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California, 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 California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 108 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin	Hassan	Padilla
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Rosen
Brown	Kaine	Sanders
Cantwell	Kelly	Schatz
Cardin	King	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Luján	Sinema
Collins	Manchin	Smith
Coons	Markey	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Tester
Duckworth	Merkley	Tillis
Durbin	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Fetterman	Murphy	
Gillibrand	Murray	
Graham	Ossoff	

Warner	Warren	Whitehouse
Warnock	Welch	Wyden

NAYS—45

Barrasso	Fischer	Paul
Blackburn	Grassley	Ricketts
Boozman	Hagerty	Risch
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Britt	Hoeben	Rounds
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Schmitt
Cassidy	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Vance
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Mullin	Young

NOT VOTING—1

Feinstein

(Mr. Kaine assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. HICKENLOOPER assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Wesley L. Hsu, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE RELATING TO "PROCEDURES COVERING SUSPENSION OF LIQUIDATION, DUTIES AND ESTIMATED DUTIES IN ACCORD WITH PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION 10414"

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE RELATING TO "ENDANGERED AND THREATENED WILDLIFE AND PLANTS; LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN; THREATENED STATUS WITH SECTION 4(D) RULE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTINCT POPULATION SEGMENT AND ENDANGERED STATUS FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTINCT POPULATION SEGMENT"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to legislative session.

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 9; and the Senate will proceed to the en bloc consideration of H.J. Res. 39, which was received from the House, and S.J. Res. 9, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows: