

Few lawyers have fought harder, smarter, and more effectively to protect women's rights in America than Ms. Rikelman. On the bench, I am confident she will serve with excellence to uphold the Constitution.

Appointments to the circuit court are essential. The lion's share of all Federal cases are decided at the circuit court level, so it is necessary these vacancies are swiftly filled with exceptional nominees like Ms. Rikelman.

This week, the Senate will also advance the nomination of Natasha Merle to be a district judge in the Eastern District of New York. With Ms. Merle's confirmation, the Senate will reach a major milestone: 100 district judges confirmed by Senate Democrats under President Biden.

Many of these 100 judges have knocked down longstanding barriers to the halls of justice: the first Muslim district judge, the first women of color to be district judges in Maryland and Oregon, the first openly LGBTQ judge in Puerto Rico. The list could go on and on.

District judges are an important reason why our Federal judiciary is far more balanced, far more diverse, and far more experienced than the one we just had a few years ago. So hitting this milestone of 100 district judges is very significant. Senate Democrats will continue moving forward on more judges in the weeks and months to come.

TAX CONVENTION WITH CHILE

Madam President, now on the Chile tax treaty, tomorrow, the Senate will vote to advance a crucial treaty impacting America's clean energy and business relationships between Chile and the United States.

A lot is at stake in our treaty with Chile, including America's global competitiveness and the future of our clean energy transition. This United States-Chile treaty is very similar to other treaties we have with more than 60 countries around the world, many of which support U.S. jobs and business growth. So I hope this treaty passes the Senate very quickly.

Chile is one corner of the so-called Lithium Triangle, home to the world's largest lithium reserves and currently the second largest lithium producer. Lithium is a key ingredient for so many important and emerging technologies, from iPhones to EV batteries to energy storage. Nations around the world, including the United States are racing to source these precious materials.

But right now, American companies are at a significant disadvantage. Because the United States doesn't have a tax treaty in place with Chile, they face double taxation and other barriers to investment and trade. Countries like China have an edge on us. It is an unnecessary roadblock to a fruitful and economically prosperous partnership between Chile and the United States.

Ratifying the Chile tax treaty would quickly remedy this issue. This treaty

has been in the works for over a decade. It now has strong bipartisan support, and now is the time to finally get it across the finish line.

I am pleased that we are finally moving the treaty forward on the floor this week. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle—Senators MENENDEZ and RISCH and many others—for their work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Senate Democrats continue to dutifully advance the Biden administration's radical nominees.

This week, the Senate will decide whether to give yet another leftwing lawyer a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench: Natasha Merle, who is an activist lawyer with a penchant for staking out extreme and inflammatory positions that are thoroughly divorced from reality. For example, she attacked widely popular election integrity measures, claiming "it's inconsistent to denounce White supremacy but not repudiate voter ID laws."

Alongside the self-proclaimed "wild-eyed leftist" Democrats just confirmed to the bench last week, Ms. Merle went after the State of Alabama for daring to verify the identities of people who cast ballots in elections. Meanwhile, Ms. Merle has found time to attack what she calls "unfounded yet repeated public assertions that there is a widespread lack of respect for law enforcement" and criticize efforts to promote law and order as "an illegal attempt to advance a false narrative that law enforcement was being attacked."

Well, Madam President, President Biden's first year in office saw the largest number of law enforcement deaths in the line of duty in 20 years. But Ms. Merle doesn't appear to like grappling with facts that don't suit her narrative. Normally, a record like this would be shockingly disqualifying, but under the Biden administration, it is not an outlier. It is an essential qualification.

Unfortunately, the President's affinity for radical nominees applies to folks already on the job as well. Last week, Democrats on the EPW Committee rammed through the nomination of Jeffery Baran to another term as Commissioner at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Mr. Baran already has an extensive record as the NRC's resident liberal obstructionist. While his colleagues collaborate on regulatory frameworks that encourage safe and efficient energy production, this

nominee prides himself on being a stick in the mud.

Even leading climate activists understand that Mr. Baran's dedication to hindering nuclear development "harm[s] the environment in the process." They know that reducing carbon emissions means embracing safe nuclear energy. Mr. Baran, however, does not.

At every opportunity, this nominee has opposed commonsense efforts to revise regulations and keep pace with the smaller and more affordable nuclear technologies of the future. He has shown that his blanket antinuclear approach is both a tired relic and an active obstruction to American prosperity.

So no wonder even some Senate Democrats are thinking twice about rubberstamping Mr. Baran's nomination. I would urge each of our colleagues to oppose it.

CHINA

Madam President, now on an entirely different matter, over the weekend, the Secretary of State traveled to Beijing and engaged senior Chinese officials, including President Xi, in meetings intended to reduce our differences. Managing and reducing tensions with America's adversaries is a typical responsibility, of course, for the Secretary of State. But this isn't necessarily an end in itself. It is a means of advancing other key interests.

Reports of the Secretary's meetings suggest Beijing blamed America for increasing tensions. Well, I certainly hope Secretary Blinken responded by holding up a mirror to the PRC.

Madam President, it is China that has increasingly threatened the people of Taiwan with military force. It is China that continues to test the limits of cyber espionage around the world. It is China that has stepped up threatening and unsafe interactions with U.S. vessels and aircraft operating legally in international waters. It is China that continues to do business with Iran, enriching the world's top state sponsor of terror. It is China that continues to provide cover for Russian aggression in Ukraine.

It is China that continues to wrongfully detain innocent foreign citizens, including Americans, while repressing its own citizens. And as just reported today, it is China that wants to build a military training facility in Cuba, 100 miles from U.S. soil.

China's conduct threatens stability across the Indo-Pacific. And it calls into question Beijing's willingness to behave responsibly, especially as the PRC rejected U.S. efforts to reestablish military-to-military communications to deescalate and prevent incidents.

These are the plain facts. One side is ramping up its provocative behavior. And this week, the Senate Armed Services Committee should reflect on Beijing's behavior as it considers the National Defense Authorization Act.

The NDAA is our primary opportunity to set Congress's national security priorities. It is a critical chance to

determine how America should deter and defend against growing threats from the PRC.

And it is the Congress's basic responsibility to establish appropriate funding levels for our Armed Forces. So our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee will be called upon to carefully consider the requirements identified by our commanders that have gone unfunded in President Biden's budget.

They should think about the steps that could improve our ability to project power into the Asia-Pacific or the assistance that could support vulnerable partners in that region.

So remember, threats of sanctions and stern diplomatic warnings don't deter Vladimir Putin in Ukraine. Words alone will not deter Chinese aggression in Asia. The Biden administration can continue to speak softly, but Congress must ensure that America carries a big stick.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DAN SWANSON

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, over the past 17 years, a lot has changed in the Senate. Back in 2006, we counted two future Presidents in our ranks: Barack Obama and Joe Biden. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate was the late Arlen Specter, back when he was a Republican, and I was the most junior member of that Judiciary Committee.

Well, today, I want to tell you about one thing that has not changed since those days, and that is the dedicated, diligent public service of a man who stood by my side every step of the way as I have gone from the Judiciary Committee's most junior member to serving as chair of the committee. That man's name is Dan Swanson.

Dan is the embodiment of wisdom, patience, kindness, dedication, and selfless public service. Sadly, this is his last week as general counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee.

While Dan would never say it himself—he is just too humble—the truth is, he has made an indelible mark on the history of this Nation.

For nearly two decades, Dan has been my go-to man in addressing our Nation's most complicated and urgent challenges. In every one of those challenges, he has been guided by a love for the law and a belief that our government can and should help people.

When you consider his background, you can understand. Dan is the son of two teachers, and you can see their influence in the way he engages with others. No matter the time of day, he always finds time to talk through the details of statutes and case precedent, often from memory, and never—never—loses his temper or patience.

And just about any other staffer on the Judiciary Committee will tell you: Dan is the best teacher and mentor you could ever hope for. Moreover, his integrity and intellect are respected by Senators and staffers of both parties.

He is remarkably consistent. Growing up, he was always calm and kind.

He always knew what he wanted to do. In fact, Dan's parents say he was just about 10 years old when he first told them he wanted to write laws when he grew up. While other kids were dreaming of being astronauts or athletes, Dan knew that his future was in the law.

Years later, he pursued that dream by going to Harvard Law School because he thought it would help him land a job in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He then had the courage and determination to leave a well-paying job at a prestigious law firm and accept a job as a legislative correspondent in my office. Within weeks of joining, we realized Dan Swanson was indispensable. And soon enough, we were directing the hardest assignments of all to his desk. No matter how complicated the topic, Dan always mastered it quickly. Frankly, Dan's legislative legacy is too long to list in a single speech, but let me tell you about a few notable accomplishments.

Dan is the mastermind behind what is known in banking circles as the dreaded "Durbin amendment," a financial reform that has saved consumers and retailers billions of dollars by setting limits on the so-called interchange fees which banks charge merchants every time you swipe a debit card.

I had never heard of a swipe fee or an interchange fee. And I stumbled into a meeting of the Senate Judiciary Committee presided over by then-Chairman Arlen Specter, where he described the process where retailers across America were forced into signing agreements with the major banks and credit card companies, Visa and Mastercard—agreements, which many times they never even had a chance to read. It was a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. And in many ways, it still is.

The notion is, if you are a restaurant or shop or a chain of stores and you want to use Visa and Mastercard for your customers, you have to pay what they demand, the so-called interchange or swipe fee.

It turns out, for most of these retailers, it is the third most expensive item of business. The labor costs, of course, and, of course, the basics of food in the restaurant or the supplies that are needed in stores, but the third most expensive thing, which retailers face day in and day out, are these interchange fees or swipe fees charged by the big banks and the big credit card companies.

Can you imagine taking on that industry, trying to force through reform? I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it without him. Dan Swanson understood. He reached the point where he mastered that particular area of the law to the point where we offered a change in the way we do business in America when it comes to debit cards.

It was a long process. We had to offer an amendment on the floor in the banking reform bill. And Dan, every step of the way, was my guide as to what we could achieve.

We changed the law, and we reduced the costs to the retailers and to merchants and restaurateurs of using those debit cards for that purpose. I don't have many friends in the big banking industry as a result of it, but I can tell you, we made the big banks pay \$8 billion a year that they otherwise would have collected in these swipe fees. And by not collecting them, consumers and retailers were the winners. My lead advocate in that area, my expert in that area, was Dan Swanson. He understood it, and he did it so well.

He also helped save countless lives from gun violence, a topic on which he has been my top adviser. Just last year, he joined the group that wrote the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the most important gun safety reform to pass Congress in nearly 30 years.

And Dan Swanson has also been my point person on the Federal judicial nominees for my State of Illinois. He even helped create the bipartisan process we use in our State to select candidates to recommend for Presidential judicial nominations.

Dan has overseen the confirmation process for all but two of the Federal judges currently serving in the entire State of Illinois. And the judges he has helped reach the Federal bench bring not only strong credentials and experience, they have brought vital new perspectives.

With Dan's help, this Senate has confirmed the first women to serve as judges in the Central and Southern Districts of Illinois, the first Black and Asian American judges to serve in those districts as well as the Seventh Circuit. And he was instrumental in the confirmation of the first African-American woman on the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Throughout his more than 17 years of service in my office, Dan has not only changed America for the better, he has also experienced some changes of his own.

Dan does not like to be in the spotlight. But 10 years ago—I love this story—he and his wife Priva made a splash in the Washington Post. They were on their way to the hospital for the birth of their second child, but they didn't make it in time. Little Arya was born in her parents' car. She arrived a few years after her big sister Maya, who was born in more traditional circumstances.

So while our team regrets losing Dan, I know there are two little girls, along with their mom, who are going to enjoy a summer of quality with dad, which is just up around the corner. I hope the four of them have a chance to head up to Vermont soon with Dan's parents Alan and Donna, as well as his brother Allie, to take long walks in nature, watch the Bronx Bombers play, and enjoy countless helpings of Dan's favorite: Jell-O and pie.

A writer I admire once observed:

With the lives that we live and the choices we make . . . let our goal be to give the world more than we take.