

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF JAMES C. O'BRIEN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in support of James O'Brien to be Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasia Affairs.

As Russia continues its brutal assault on Ukraine, as democratic backsliding continues to threaten Central Europe, as we continue to grapple with energy and food security, we must have a fully staffed and empowered diplomatic corps. Vacancies leave a vacuum, and they send the wrong message.

Ukraine is by far one of my highest priorities. It is very clear to me that making sure Russia does not succeed in Ukraine is in the United States' national security interest. Ukraine is not only fighting for itself; if Ukraine loses, Moldova and Georgia are next. Ukraine is on the frontline of our fight to defend democracy and our shared values.

Iran is watching. North Korea is watching. China is watching. When they see the resolve of the United States and our coalition of partners, it stops them from thinking about taking military action elsewhere. That is why we need to continue to show leadership when supporting Ukraine against Russia's aggression.

As the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I will do everything I can to show the international community that we stand with Ukraine today and tomorrow. That means ensuring Ukraine gets more air defense and long-range missiles. That means working with our European partners who continue to house and support Ukrainian refugees, supporting humanitarian assistance for those suffering, including children who have been abducted into Russia and families who have been torn apart. That means finding a path for the administration's supplemental request. And, yes, that means getting our nominees to their posts in the European Affairs Bureau.

Without our nominees confirmed and in their positions, who will advocate on behalf of American values in Ukraine and beyond? Who will advance America's national security interests? Who will work to lead our efforts from Washington to shore up our transatlantic alliance in pursuit of stability and peace?

President Putin is helping far-right political parties, individuals, and groups across Europe and beyond who support his agenda. He is attacking the human rights of Ukrainian citizens. He is laying waste to Ukrainian cities. I believe he is trying to commit genocide in Ukraine, and I support an international tribunal into Russian war crimes like the one we saw in Nuremberg after World War II.

Given these challenges, we need someone leading the diplomatic effort

on behalf of the American people to confront Russia's aggression. That is why we must confirm James O'Brien today.

Ambassador O'Brien had an impressive hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He presented a compelling vision for how he would lead the Bureau of European and Eurasia Affairs. He laid out the importance of America's leadership on integrating Ukraine, as well as the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans, into the transatlantic economic and political structures. He was reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee by a bipartisan voice vote.

Ambassador O'Brien brings a wealth of experience to this position, having most recently worked as the head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination, targeting, among others, the Russian oligarchs who thrive on corruption—Russian oligarchs whose corrupt networks are continuing to fuel the war in Ukraine, which in turn impacts global energy and food prices for just about every single person in the world.

Beyond his most recent post, Ambassador O'Brien's professional resume reads like building blocks for this position. Having served as the Principal Deputy Director of Policy Planning and the Presidential Envoy for the Balkans, he will be up to speed if the conflict again erupts in Kosovo. He won't be afraid to call out bad actors in Bosnia and work with those advocating for peace, transparency, and prosperity. He helped establish the Office for Hostage Affairs and worked for the safe return of 100 American citizens. He dealt with scientific and environmental agreements and Russia and Ukraine's post-Soviet transitions. He has been part of initiatives to investigate and prosecute persons responsible for war crimes. He has received numerous awards of distinction from the State Department.

This is a seasoned professional who is ready to take on this high-profile challenge. Once he is confirmed, he will be able to hit the ground running. That sends a signal that the United States cares about what happens in Europe, and right now, we need to show our resolve.

Ukrainians are doing their part. Even as they fight a war to defend their country, they are making good progress on anti-corruption. We need to be there for them and make clear that our support is long term and bipartisan.

We need to stand with Ukraine to make sure it gets everything it needs to defend itself and succeed in this Russian war. Ukrainian success on the battlefield is what will bring Russia to the negotiating table—nothing else. That is why it is time for the United States and the international community to step up. We cannot take a pass on good versus evil.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting yes on cloture for this nominee, yes to advancing our diplomatic efforts to confront Putin's war in Ukraine, yes

to promoting American values, and yes to advancing America's national security interests.

With that, I yield the floor.

I ask unanimous consent that the vote scheduled for 5:30 begin now.

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

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 clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The 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. 319, James C. O'Brien, of Nebraska, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European and Eurasian Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher A. Coons, Jeanne Shaheen, Richard J. Durbin, Gary C. Peters, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher Murphy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Edward J. Markey, Alex Padilla, Chris Van Hollen, Jeff Merkley, Margaret Wood Hassan, Peter Welch.

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 James C. O'Brien, of Nebraska, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European and Eurasian Affairs), shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), and the Senator from Michigan (Mrs. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) would have voted "yea."

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 63, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 248 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murphy
Bennet	Graham	Ossoff
Blumenthal	Grassley	Padilla
Booker	Hassan	Paul
Brown	Heinrich	Peters
Butler	Hickenlooper	Reed
Cantwell	Hirono	Ricketts
Capito	Kaine	Romney
Cardin	Kelly	Rosen
Carper	King	Rounds
Casey	Klobuchar	Sanders
Collins	Lujan	Schatz
Coons	Manchin	Schumer
Cornyn	Markey	Shaheen
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Sinema
Crapo	Menendez	Smith
Duckworth	Merkley	Tester
Durbin	Murkowski	Tillis

Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock

Warren
Welch
Whitehouse

Wicker
Wyden
Young

NAYS—32

Barrasso
Blackburn
Boozman
Braun
Britt
Budd
Cassidy
Cotton
Cramer
Cruz
Daines

Ernst
Fischer
Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis

Marshall
Moran
Mullin
Rubio
Schmitt
Scott (FL)
Sullivan
Thune
Tuberville
Vance

NOT VOTING—5

Fetterman
Murray

Risch
Scott (SC)

Stabenow

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). The yeas are 63, the nays are 32.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Kansas.

UKRAINE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I don't expect this to be the best formed set of remarks that I have ever made on the floor of the U.S. Senate, and I would guess that they could be refined and improved—and maybe somebody will edit them and make them in a better form—but I didn't want to miss the opportunity to express my views in regard to several things that occurred in the U.S. Senate, in the Congress, in this country last week.

I think our country faces perhaps the greatest challenges ever faced in my lifetime, certainly in my time as an elected official. It seems to me that the array of challenges from our adversaries are real, are increasing, and are threatening.

I have always been an optimist. I expect us to be able to do the things necessary to change the course of history, to make sure that the United States remains the country that it is today.

Perhaps my fears arise because Robba and I are now grandparents. Perhaps it is this love of another generation and the desire to see that they experience the things that I have been able to experience in my lifetime.

I want to highlight a recent and important essay penned by a former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, a fellow Kansan, warns of our government dysfunction at a moment in history in which our Nation confronts graver threats to its security than it has in past decades—perhaps ever.

Our constituents, from time to time, pay attention to what we do here, but I want us to recognize that perhaps even more intently, our adversaries pay attention to what we do or don't do here.

What we do and how we do it either strengthens or harms the future of the United States. It can increase the trust placed in us by our allies or it can embolden our adversaries because if I am right, our future is in the balance, and we need to work to increase those who decide to be on the side of freedom and liberty, of stability, of a better life for all people. We need to be the leader of a coalition that understands the values and the American ideals and how they

alter lives, and we need to make certain that those who should be on the side of right are not sitting on the fence.

During my time in the U.S. Senate, I have never been more angry or more sullen than those few days that week or so in which our country left Afghanistan. Our unprepared actions and void of leadership resulted in the deaths of Americans, American servicemembers, and it stranded thousands of Afghans—Afghan allies—behind enemy lines. I raise this because I want to tie it to what may now be happening here. Those few days may have been among the most costly in emboldening those who seek our country's demise, and I fear today that we are about to again demonstrate to the world our feckless ambivalence to lead. I don't want us to lead as a superior or to be in the face of our allies, but I want people who care, countries that believe in peace and prosperity and freedom around the globe to be part of an alliance that the United States is an important component of.

Normally, when we think about the challenges we face from adversaries abroad, we would think: Well, it is time to increase defense spending. We need more assets. We need to make our military stronger. My view—and I believe the correct view—is that is true. But of equal importance, we need to demonstrate resolve, resolve in the support of allies and resolve in the resistance to enemies.

When I say that I fear today we are failing, I speak of the ambivalence of our commitment to support the efforts to repeal, repulse, remove the Putin invasion across the borders of Ukraine. Should we fail to live up to the necessary deeds and actions that need to be taken, in my view, we are once again replicating the message that we sent in our chaotic and unfortunate manner in which we withdrew from Afghanistan. To my colleagues who might criticize one but look the other way to the other, I think it is a view that cannot be sustained. Failure to do right, to do things right, is the same, and the consequences are the same. Leadership depends upon reliability.

Today, Americans cannot go it alone. We are not the only power in the world. The burdens of today's challenges are too immense to carry alone. Our allies are force multipliers, and failing to lead in Ukraine lets those most in danger—those in the neighborhood of Ukraine—change course and look elsewhere for a path forward.

It is always easier to duck responsibilities, but almost never is it the right course of action.

Our European allies and those elsewhere in the world continue to look to the United States of America for leadership. The end of American support to Ukraine would be another indication—just as I believe it was in our withdrawal from Afghanistan—that we are not the leaders that are necessary in today's dangerous world. Never do we

want to be seen by those waiting to pick a side—we would never want them to reach the conclusion that the United States cannot be relied upon.

Another Cabinet Secretary just like Robert Gates—this one is from Wichita, KS, as well—former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and I penned a joint opinion piece. We made the case of helping Ukraine. While I pointed out how it matters to the world, what we pointed out is how it matters to America, to the American citizens and to the future of our country, and that we benefit, the United States, by the Ukrainians' success in their country.

All of this discussion last week about whether Ukraine should continue to receive funding was surrounded by another development in our body politic—in the way that we do business in this Congress and in the way that we make decisions about the right course forward. So let me tie to the concerns I have about the decision that was made in regard to Ukraine to the difficulties we had in what should be straightforward: funding the government into the future.

Every county commission, every school board, every city council in Kansas can come up with a budget and make decisions about the funding of their business, the funding of their purpose into the future, and we turned what should be routine decisions—I say "routine," but they are decisions made with care and thought. There is no question that the spending path we are on is not sustainable. We are on a different path. Even the appropriations bills—the 13 that have passed the U.S. Committee on Appropriations—are on a different path than what we have been on in increasing spending.

Those are important decisions, but we don't need to manufacture a crisis to make a point. The crisis doesn't solve the spending problem. Yet, in so many instances, we look for the highlight, the television time, the social media responses that sometimes seem to reward the behavior that is the most disruptive and the least effective.

The challenges we face require setting aside unnecessary disagreement and disunion. Last week demonstrated our system as creating disunion when we need unity and common ground in a dangerous world. Of all the times that I would expect Americans and their elected officials to come together would be when we see the actions, when we know the dangerous nature of our world: when we see what China is doing and what its intentions seem to be; when we know what is taking place in Iran and their efforts around the globe; when Russia invades a neighboring country's borders; when North Korea fires missiles.

We have united as a nation numerous times in our history, and we need to return to those circumstances. When things are so different, Americans need to pull together, and that can happen if there is leadership here in Congress to do so.