

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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. 223.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Irma Carrillo Ramirez, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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. 223, Irma Carrillo Ramirez, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Mazie Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Peter Welch, Michael F. Bennet, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Jeanne Shaheen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Ben Ray Lujan, Jack Reed, Gary C. Peters.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, November 27, be waived.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TIKTOK

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, over the past 52 days, we have watched a horrifying propaganda campaign take over our social media platforms.

Anti-Israel sentiment and support for Hamas terrorism has gone mainstream,

and even Biden administration officials like Jake Sullivan admit that Hamas is using popular online platforms to push propaganda. Of course, TikTok is the enabler-in-chief in this regard.

Here are some stats for you: Between October 23 and 30, videos with the “StandWithPalestine” hashtag received 285 million views globally, while videos with “StandWithIsrael” hashtag received just 64 million views.

Now, keep in mind, these stats reflect the online discourse surrounding the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust 3 weeks after it happened. Everyone has seen the pictures and videos of what Hamas had done. We knew that they were holding innocent people and families and children hostage.

It is terrible enough on its own, but we know that it is also a symptom of a very serious disease. We have seen more than enough evidence to suggest that TikTok’s executives are manipulating user sentiment with Israel. Why would they do this? Because leveraging the anti-Israel cause is in the best interest of their handlers in the Chinese Communist Party.

By silencing Americans and those who are pro-Israel and other westerners who counter anti-Semitic propaganda, they can ingratiate themselves with the Arab world and undermine the United States as the global superpower and chief mediator in the Middle East.

They know that by doing this, they are normalizing terrorism and genocide, but it puts the CCP and their partners in the new “axis of evil” even one step closer to global domination, and that is their goal. Russia, China, Iran, North Korea—that “axis of evil”—they intend to push themselves to global domination. So going after Israel, going after pro-Israel, allowing anti-Semitic conversations to be carried out, they are OK with that. They look at it and say: small price to pay for us to be able to get our way.

Well, I have looked through the past few weeks of coverage of the role of TikTok and how they have played into this, and I came across story after story defending the platform and the firehose of pro-terrorist content that it promotes. And, of course, you are going to have story after story defending TikTok—of course—because it is OK with them to promote terrorism and to promote genocide.

Lately, those same mainstream media outlets have all been obsessed with context, and I think we can all benefit from understanding the context around what is happening with this content that is online.

Here is the context: The context is, the Chinese Communist Party has complete control over what does and does not go viral on TikTok.

A Forbes investigation into TikTok and ByteDance—and ByteDance is the Beijing company that owns TikTok, the CCP board member of ByteDance.

So the Forbes investigation into TikTok and ByteDance revealed that a

ByteDance tool, which is run by TikTok staff in China, is tracking mentions of what it considers to be “sensitive words.” They do this across the company’s products.

Now, some of these sensitive words may be things that are anti-CCP, anti-positions of the CCP, anti-Xi Jinping or anti-Mao. Those are considered sensitive. They draw the attention, and they get labeled by the staff as “sensitive words” that are forbidden or that must be killed or that are prohibited. In other words, TikTok is censoring the speech, and they are, in part, blocking some posts from ever being seen. This is why you have the hundreds of millions who are seeing pro-Hamas posts and the tens of millions who are seeing a pro-Israel post.

There is something else that we should all be aware of. And parents, listen up on this. The tool also tracks every time one of these words comes up. So if you are repeatedly posting something that is pro-Israel, that gets tracked every time. Also, it is recording who said it, so your identity is revealed, and where you are located. Think about that—who you are, where you are located, what you are saying. That is surveillance and tracking.

Now, as this Chamber is aware, Senator BLUMENTHAL and I and others at Commerce and Judiciary Committees have had lots of hearings on these social media platforms. And at one of the hearings, we had TikTok’s CEO come before Congress, and he told lawmakers, under oath, that his platform does not promote or remove content at the request of the Chinese Government.

What we now know? That is false. They are doing this.

But word lists in ByteDance’s “sensitive words” tool deal directly with content that Beijing wants to silence, including language critical of China’s Government, their military, their history.

Simply tracking speech isn’t enough for communist China. They are using these tools to control dissent. In April of this year, Joe Biden’s own Department of Justice announced that they were investigating the CCP’s use of social media platforms to hunt people down and silence them.

They charged 40 officers of China’s national police with orchestrating transnational repression schemes against Chinese dissidents living—get this—living in the United States. There, again, they are coming after our citizens, trying to censor, trying to control, trying to manipulate.

If TikTok’s bias pushed their algorithm in the other direction, Congress would have already banned it in the United States. Instead, the vast majority of the left and their friends in the media are treating the pervasiveness of this pro-Hamas, pro-terrorist, pro-murder sentiment like the latest viral phenomenon.

The best, most recent example of this is the appalling popularity of Osama bin Laden’s letter to America. This

didn't happen on its own. We had TikTok pushing along on this. The TikTokers thought that the architect of the 9/11 attacks made some good points. Their obsession spread to other platforms as well. At one point, the letter clocked in more than 719 million impressions, and that was just on X.

TikTok eventually took down mentions of the letter, but by then the anti-Semites had revealed themselves and exposed other young people to the insanity in their videos. It is disgusting—absolutely disgusting—that you would have the applauding of a letter from Osama bin Laden.

We have seen this hatred rear its head before in the form of stalking, harassment, vandalism, and physical violence. A high school in New York descended into chaos last week when a group of teenagers formed a lynch mob to hunt down a Jewish teacher who had attended a pro-Israel rally.

Earlier this month, Halal International did a poll and found that anti-Semitism on campus has become so out of control that more than one-third of Jewish college students feel they have to hide their religion. This is appalling. It also shows the ignorance of many of these young people, and it is evidence that the CCP's influence operation has taken hold.

So it is time for the U.S. Senate to take this seriously. As I said, it is the symptom of a disease. It is neither reasonable nor rational to suggest that China would create a tool capable of manipulating public opinion on a global scale and then that they would choose not to use that tool to their advantage.

You know, we have talked a lot about TikTok and what they are doing in this country. We have talked a lot about how TikTok in China is very different; it is an educational tool. It is very different from what you see here with funny videos or cat videos or some of the very disturbing content that is being pushed on our Nation's youth.

There is bipartisan agreement that the very existence of this tool—this surveillance, this propaganda tool—that the Chinese Communist Party has created, which we call TikTok—there is evidence that the very existence of this poses a threat to our national security and to that of our allies, which means the Senate should have absolutely no trouble throwing its support behind a ban on TikTok in the United States.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY M. BRYAN

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I rise in support of President Biden's

nominee to be the next U.S. district court judge for the District of Minnesota, and that is Jeff Bryan.

I want to thank my colleague TINA SMITH. The two of us convened a judicial selection committee in our own State with very outstanding people who helped recommend some names to the White House. I would also like to thank Senators DURBIN and GRAHAM for helping to move Judge Bryan's nomination through the Judiciary Committee—on which the Presiding Officer serves—on a bipartisan basis and to thank Leader SCHUMER for making time for the Senate to consider his nomination.

Judge Bryan is a dedicated public servant with a distinguished career spanning over 16 years serving the people of Minnesota, including as a State court judge and as a former Federal prosecutor.

Through his devotion to justice and the rule of law, he has earned the respect and support of judges, attorneys, and law enforcement officials across the political spectrum. This is why he received a strong vote in the Judiciary Committee and why I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support his confirmation.

Judge Bryan was born in an Army hospital in Fort Bragg. His mom was an English teacher, and his dad was a captain with the 82nd Airborne who instilled in Judge Bryan an appreciation for public service. His father's service in the Army brought their family to Fort Bliss, near El Paso, TX, where Judge Bryan grew up.

After graduating summa cum laude from the University of Texas, Judge Bryan went back home to El Paso and worked as a substitute teacher. He then headed to Yale for law school. As a law student, he served as a student supervisor in the parents and children clinic and was president of the Yale Law Christian Fellowship.

He also met the love of his life, a Minnesotan—we knew we would get to Minnesota at some point in the story. He met the love of his life, a Minnesotan, at law school. Ultimately, he traded the Texas heat for the Minnesota winters, and he and Liz settled down in St. Paul.

If confirmed, Judge Bryan will be the first Latino Federal judge in Minnesota. He is active in the Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association, tutoring students, and has served on the board of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. For 20 years, even before he had kids of his own, he taught Sunday school at his church.

He clerked for Judge Paul Magnuson, who was a judge appointed by President Reagan, and spent several years in private practice. He spent 6 years as an assistant U.S. attorney, where he prosecuted violent gangs and large-scale drug organizations. He prosecuted over 350 criminals and directed what was, at the time, the largest meth investigation and cocaine investigation ever conducted in the District of Minnesota.

He played a key role in dismantling a cocaine trafficking network that spanned from McAllen, TX, to St. Cloud, MN. He won the Department of Justice "case of the year" award for his work on that case. Additionally, he led a meth investigation that resulted in the recovery of more than 9,600 grams of meth, as well as convictions of more than 60 defendants.

So I don't think it is a surprise that we have heard from former law enforcement officials at the local, State, and Federal levels who praised him, of course, for his work and devotion to justice but, also, particularly for his work ethic and his dedication as a prosecutor.

He was hired as a prosecutor by Erica MacDonald, who was appointed by President Trump to serve as a U.S. attorney for Minnesota. She said that Judge Bryan was a "no-nonsense Federal prosecutor" and is an "outstanding" nominee "for judicial appointment."

Judge Bryan left the U.S. Attorney's Office in 2013 and was appointed to serve on the Ramsey County District Court in St. Paul. There, he presided over more than 8,000 cases, including violent felony criminal cases, and was only reversed in 4 cases.

In 2019, he was appointed to serve as a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals. He has sat on over 500 cases as an appellate judge and has authored nearly 200 opinions and has only been reversed in 2 cases.

Judge Bryan has, understandably, earned endorsements from some of the most esteemed jurists in our State, including four senior U.S. district court judges who were appointed by Presidents of both parties. Among them is the man he clerked for, Judge Paul Magnuson, who described Judge Bryan as a person of "exceptional character" and offered his highest recommendation.

In addition, nearly 40 State judges, appointed by Governors of both parties, enthusiastically support this nomination. They praised Judge Bryan as a "prepared, fair-minded, and hard-working judge" and said that he has a "determined focus on explaining and applying the law in an unbiased manner."

For those same reasons, the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary rated Judge Bryan as "well qualified" to serve as a district court judge, the highest rating that the committee awards.

I know that Jeff Bryan will make an outstanding Federal district court judge for the District of Minnesota. I urge my colleagues to support his confirmation.

I yield the floor.

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