

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection has been heard.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO ZACH MCCUE

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today for a moment of reflection about an extraordinary person, and I would like permission to give Zach McCue permission to sit next to me while I give these remarks that will most certainly embarrass him tremendously.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very, very much, Mr. President. Thank you very much for the fist pump, Mr. President. I know that you have a lot of appreciation and love for New Jersey, so this is really a New Jersey moment. So thank you, sir.

I rise today with an extraordinary amount of joy but sadness, an extraordinary amount of pride but a sense of loss because today I get a chance to say a few words about my very embarrassed, longtime friend, member of my staff, Zach McCue.

Now, Zach has been a member of my staff my entire time in the U.S. Senate. In fact, he predated me in this office because Zach worked for my predecessor, Senator Frank Lautenberg. So he has served in this institution and has served the people of New Jersey for 12 years.

But now he is moving out to new gardens within the Garden State. Zach has a title in my office. He is the deputy State director, but the truth of the matter is, that title does little justice to the grand import and enormous impact of this incredible young man.

Zach, I believe, is one of those people who is an unsung hero, who makes Congressional work and, in so many ways, has made indelible contributions to New Jersey. If the highest calling of our country is service to it, then Zach is someone who embodies that ideal of public service and patriotism.

He has worked tirelessly. He has worked indefatigably. He has worked relentlessly in service of our State. I know he works around the clock because occasionally I disturb him at some late hours.

But the truth of the matter is, as hard as he works, he works away from the limelight, not capturing headlines, not sucking oxygen out of rooms but, in so many ways, making the difference that New Jerseyans feel.

I have seen him and how he deals with people. In a time when so many people don't feel like they are seen or appreciated, he is somebody who embodies empathy and has an extraordinary ability to connect with others,

to allow them to feel like they matter, to feel heard, and to so often have their issues addressed.

And more than just being someone who is extraordinary with people, he has a pretty incredible mind to grasp complicated policy. He is a bit of a wonk. He has a flash of the nerdiness in him. But that knowledge, that acumen, that policy expertise, he has put to work on behalf of New Jerseyans.

Now, I know that infrastructure is not the sexiest issue in America, but for New Jerseyans, it is vital. Over 700,000 people commute just to New York, and that doesn't include those who commute into Philly as well. And infrastructure in our State is critical, and this has been one of Zach's primary areas of focus. He has had extraordinary drive and focus that has helped to advance so much critical infrastructure work in our State.

And more than this, his mastery of knowledge of other issues of import to New Jerseyans, from environmental justice to social justice, has made him such a powerful force in our State and, indeed, he has made me a better U.S. Senator.

Zach is a Jersey boy. I think if there were a Mount Rushmore of New Jersey, he might be eligible to stand up upon that pantheon of some of the great Jerseyans like Bruce and Bon Jovi. He is a rock star, at least in our office, and a guy that grew up in Jersey. He grew up in Rumson, and he has raised his family with his incredibly indulgent wife Meg in Cranford.

Zach joined Lautenberg's office early, right after graduating from Penn State, which is sort of a Western Jersey college. And after 2 years with Senator Lautenberg, including a stint actually as his driver—and I hear that he was OK as a driver—Zach joined an environmental nonprofit in New Jersey focusing on environmental issues, where he worked on the issues that he still holds dear, things like protecting our coastal and marine resources and leaving behind a cleaner and healthier New Jersey environment for generations.

And then, in 2014, he joined my office and, as a new Senator, as a junior Senator, he grew with my office and helped to lead our office to being the success we are today.

He continues to lead on our team on issues he knows so well, from environmental issues so that we can make sure that we deal with the threat of climate change head-on; transportation and infrastructure, moving critical programs that, but for him, would not be seeing the kind of success we see today, like the Gateway project moving forward; and overall improvements to consumer safety and to reliability and so much more.

During the earliest and darkest days of the COVID pandemic, when our team was working overtime to help constituents in need and doing Zoom call after Zoom call, working early in the morning to late at night, I got to see Zach's

leadership in this dark time shine like a North Star.

No. 1, he helped to hold our office together amongst the strain and the challenges that were on each and every one of us. He helped us to stay focused on our purpose. He brought humor and groundedness to the work. And every day, he rose with that heroic compassion and empathy for the challenges that New Jerseyans were facing.

Look, this is an extraordinary institution, and very famous people have sat in the seats here since 1859. But the truth of this institution that doesn't get told often enough is that, for every great Senator, there are usually greater staff people who empower them in the mission.

I have served in this institution for a decade, and I say, with no false modesty but just the truth, that I have been the Senator I am today because of the leadership that Zach has brought to my team each and every day.

We have a calling here as Senators in this deliberative body, and that is to be of service, that is to rise to challenges, and that is to give dignity to the office and to be there for people.

This office has been successful over these 10 years because of Zach. I am grateful to him. I am grateful to his family who raised him. I am grateful for his spouse and his children who have supported and loved him through his service. And most of all, I know that even though New Jerseyans don't know his name up and down our State, I know that our State is profoundly grateful.

As Zach prepares to leave our office, the good news is, he may be leaving the employ of the U.S. Senate, but he is not leaving the service of our State. He is going on to another public service job.

I and my team wish him the best of luck. Once you are a part of the Booker team, you are always part of the Booker team.

But what excites me most is that Zach is a young guy with a heart full of love and a soul driven by commitment to country and to people. And so as great as his service was to us, I suspect that he still has some extraordinary great days ahead of him.

And so it is with a lot of sadness but a lot of gratitude, it is with a lot of pride but a lot of just missing him already, I say from the Senate floor into the Senate RECORD, a hearty, hearty thank-you to my friend, to my team leader, and to a great American, Zach McCue. Thank you.

No applause from the Gallery, please. That is against Senate regulation. Thank you very much.

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

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

MILITARY PERSONNEL CONFIRMATION RESTORATION ACT OF 2023

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tonight, just in time for the holidays, the Senate is giving our military, our military families, a present: the justice and backpay they so richly earned and deserved. Finally, we are able to right the wrong of Senator TUBERVILLE's illogical, hurtful, and dangerous holds and the massive impacts the holds had on military families.

These men and women have worked so hard for our country for so long. And just because of Senator TUBERVILLE, in a really nasty—and whimsical, almost—holding back of their promotions, they weren't getting paid.

Well, tonight, at long last, we are giving these military families—families that have already sacrificed so much—the justice they deserve: their backpay. And it is a good night for them, and it is a good night for America. America is keeping its promise and saying to these men and women: You served us well. You don't deserve to be penalized in any way at all.

And so, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3553, introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3553) to provide a retroactive effective date for the promotions of senior officers of the Armed Forces whose military promotions were delayed as a result of the suspension of Senate confirmation of such promotions.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read three times and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 3553) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 3553

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Military Personnel Confirmation Restoration Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

Congress holds the men and women who defend the United States in the highest esteem.

SEC. 3. RETROACTIVE EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTIONS OF SENIOR OFFICERS OF ARMED FORCES THAT WERE DELAYED AS A RESULT OF SUSPENSION OF SENATE CONFIRMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of an individual confirmed, during the period beginning on December 5, 2023, and ending on December 31, 2023, to a grade or rank in the Armed Forces associated with pay grade O-7 or higher and whose confirmation was delayed as a result of the suspension of the provision of advice and consent by the Senate to appointments to such grades and ranks that began in February 2023—

(1) the Secretary of Defense shall provide the individual, retroactive to the date described in subsection (b)—

(A) pay and allowances at the rates or in the amounts payable for the pay grade associated with the appointment of the individual; and

(B) the benefits to which an individual in the grade or rank associated with the appointment is entitled; and

(2) the date described in subsection (b) shall be the date used for determining the seniority of the individual in the grade or rank associated with the appointment.

(b) DATE DESCRIBED.—The date described in this subsection is, with respect to an individual described in subsection (a), the date that is the later of—

(1) the date that is 30 days after the date on which the nomination of the individual was placed on the Executive Calendar of the Senate; or

(2) the date on which the individual would have been appointed but for the suspension of the provision of advice and consent described in subsection (a), as determined by the Secretary concerned (as defined in section 101 of title 10, United States Code).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 214, 431, and 432; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Lisa A. Johnson, of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Lebanese Republic; Todd Gloria, of California, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation for a term expiring December 10, 2023; and Todd Gloria, of California, to be a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation for a term expiring December 10, 2029, (Reappointment)?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motions filed during yesterday's session ripen at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 19.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate

proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO JILL BOUDREAU

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and congratulate Mayor Jill Boudreau on her retirement after 12 years of service as mayor of Mount Vernon, WA. During that time, she has been an inspiring and impactful public servant—leading a municipal government that has been a model of efficiency, adaptability, dignity, and inclusivity. Her leadership has been a guiding light through some of the city's most difficult times, and her advocacy has helped Mount Vernon prosper over the past decade-plus.

Mayor Boudreau was sworn into office in January of 2012 and quickly launched ambitious initiatives to bolster economic development, make the city's government more open and accessible to residents, and improve public transportation. Over her three terms, she has been an indispensable voice for the region—serving on countless boards and commissions and championing voting rights, public art installations, and civic engagement. Most recently, Mayor Boudreau has been the driving force behind the Mount Vernon Library Commons, a transformative project that will be one of the largest capital investments in Skagit County history. When completed, the Commons will be one of Washington State's most energy-efficient municipal buildings and will bring a library, community center, commercial kitchen, transit center, and one of our nation's largest electric vehicle charging stations all into one facility. The Commons is the product of Mayor Boudreau's bold vision and tireless efforts. Her extraordinary leadership on the Commons and other projects has been recognized by the Association for Washington Cities, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Ambassador to Uruguay.

I had the opportunity to work most closely with Mayor Boudreau on flood protection projects along the Skagit River, and throughout those discussions, it was clear to everyone just how deeply she cared about her community. Her dedication and compassion are also evident in Mayor Boudreau's leadership during challenging and stressful times, whether it was the Skagit River Bridge collapse, the Cascade Mall shooting, or the COVID-19 pandemic. I know the citizens of Mount Vernon are as grateful as I am for her strength and hard work during these difficult moments.

One of the things I admire most about Mayor Boudreau is her weekly commitment to meeting with residents for "Coffee Hours." She has held more than 350 of these meetings during her administration, something I have heard about from her constituents during our shared time in public office.