

crafting op-eds, jotting talking points, compiling newsletters, pitching reporters on both coasts, and reading and translating my handwriting, which may have been the most difficult task of all because I can't read it 5 minutes after the ink dries—all the while thoughtfully advising and gently guiding me.

She has been by my side through some of the biggest and most challenging moments of the time that I have been here in the Senate: helping secure more funding for the U.S. Forest Service to fight wildfires in 2012; supporting Janet Yellen, the first woman to chair the Federal Reserve; ensuring that regulators actually implemented our stronger Volcker rule in 2013; mourning with the citizens of Roseburg, OR, after the Umpqua Community College shooting in 2015; ensuring that we led the resistance at rallies and protests following President Trump's election in 2016; preparing and staffing me through the night during my 15-hour-and-27-minute marathon speech against Neil Gorsuch's Supreme Court nomination in 2017; traveling to the southern border with me in 2018 to show the world how the Trump administration was ripping immigrant children out of their parents' arms; writing, editing, and annotating our office's comprehensive 80-page report on the Trump administration's attacks on immigration and asylum in 2019; reorienting our entire communications operation to a virtual operation when the pandemic hit; supporting Oregon communities after the Labor Day wildfires in 2020; cleaning up my hideaway after it was ransacked by insurrectionists on January 6, 2021; and, through it all, finally, for filling in for long stretches when we were down a digital director or speechwriter or a deputy press secretary.

As one of our team members put it, "She's unstoppable."

And my staff talk about how Martina, in addition to her communication talents, is always the first to welcome and support a new member of our team, whether that member is in Washington, DC, or in Oregon.

In 2017, the first year of the Trump administration, the turnout of our townhalls was extraordinary, including one townhall where more than 3,000 people showed up. So Martina flew out from DC to support our new Oregon team with her years of experience, wisdom, and lightning-quick wit.

And every year, when Senate staff dress up their dogs in Halloween costumes for Senator TILLIS's annual "Bipawtisan" puppy parade through the atrium of the Hart Office Building, Martina goes down to take the pictures and share the joy with our team on both coasts.

As one of our former Oregon team members put it:

I looked forward to each Halloween because Martina would send [those] pictures, keeping stateside staff informed about the best day of the year in [Washington], DC.

I am not sure what it says about our work here when the best day is when there is a puppy parade.

She is also a brilliant writer. One of our team conservatively estimates that she has written millions of words for our office, putting dry policy language into punchy, plain English with stunning speed and navigating thorny political issues with eloquence and grace.

One of her longtime colleagues said:

I always liken her to a piano virtuoso taking their seat in a concert hall and banging out Mozart or Rachmaninoff and making it look effortless while I struggled just to keep up.

Her colleagues will line up to tell you that, working every day in the chaos of the Senate, Martina is "refreshingly calm," "thoughtful," "kind," and an "encyclopedic fountain of knowledge," who is "rarely seen without a smile or funny remark, even in the most stressful of times."

When she speaks in a meeting, people listen. I listen. She was one of the very first in our office to speak about the need for what has become our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee.

Generations of our staff have stories about her quiet gestures of kindness and support that have meant so much to so many over so many years. That is especially true of her communications team, past and present, some of whom have been able to join us tonight.

Even in the toughest moments, she is always there to laugh and commiserate while still delivering the most professional and effective communications operation in the Senate. Whether it has been struggling through late-night shutdown shenanigans while she and another colleague were battling the flu, to encouraging new staff members to offer creative ideas even if the office had never tried anything like that action before, she has always been there for her team.

As one said:

I'm still in major denial. I have never felt like I was more a part of a team than here, and a huge part of that is Martina.

Another said:

It's hard for me to put into words the difference Martina has made in my life as she has continued to mentor and guide me—always a text message or email away with invaluable insights.

Yet another colleague summed it up by saying:

I . . . feel constantly lucky to have worked with, for, and alongside Martina. I always admired and respected the way she approached her work—with humility, grace, and humor—and more than a little bit of sarcasm.

And I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate to have not only been able to call her a colleague but to be able to continue to call her a very dear friend.

I couldn't have said that better myself.

Next week, for the first time in 13 years, I will attend the State of the Union Address without Martina by my side. For more than a decade, we have elbowed our way through the television

cameras in crowded Statuary Hall, rushing from interview to interview late into the night. I am going to miss her next week.

Then there are those thousands of floor charts and hundreds of interviews that have occurred over more than two terms in the Senate.

Tonight, Martina is here, staffing me on the Senate floor for the last time.

At the beginning of my remarks, I quoted Ann Bancroft, who went on to say the following:

Stay curious, keep learning, and keep experiencing. Life is wild and wonderful, and it's good to challenge yourself now and then.

Ann went on to say:

I always say that my best advice is to "get lost"—because . . . that's when the good life stories are created, and you will always find your way back.

Well, soon, Martina will be following Ann Bancroft's advice as she sets off for Southern California and the start of the Pacific Crest Trail, which she will follow north, all the way to Canada, with Ann Bancroft's words in her ears, saying:

It's good to challenge yourself now and then.

And her best advice is to "get lost" as "that's when good life stories are created, and you will . . . find your way back."

Well, I look forward to her stopping on the Pacific Crest Trail in Oregon and saying hello.

For now, though, I will simply say it is with deep gratitude that Team Merkley and I thank Martina McLennan for her many years of service to the U.S. Senate and to the people of Oregon. We toast her tonight with an appropriate saying: "Happy trails."

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

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 516, Aprille Joy Ericsson, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion 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. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Aprille Joy Ericsson, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense. (New Position)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ericsson nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, with the exception of Col. Ralph J. Rizzo, Jr., and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Calendar Nos. 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, with the exception of Col. Ralph J. Rizzo, Jr., and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc, as follows:

NOMINATIONS [NEW REPORTS] IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be admiral

Adm. Samuel J. Paparo, Jr.

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named officers for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Frank L. Bradfield, III
Brig. Gen. Howard T. Clark, III
Brig. Gen. Robert W. Claude
Brig. Gen. Melissa A. Coburn
Brig. Gen. William D. Murphy
Brig. Gen. Dana N. Nelson
Brig. Gen. David A. Piffarerio
Brig. Gen. Regina A. Sabric
Brig. Gen. Mark V. Slominski

IN THE ARMY

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. James D. Burk
Col. Andrew L. Landers
Col. Bill A. Soliz
Col. Yolonda R. Summons

The following named Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be brigadier general

Col. Craig M. Hunter

The following named Army National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12211:

To be brigadier general

Col. Michael K. Moreni

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Vivek Kshetrapal

The following named officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Army to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 12203:

To be brigadier general

Col. Carlos E. Gorbea

IN THE MARINE CORPS

The following named officers for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Marine Corps under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be brigadier general

Col. Nick I. Brown
Col. Shannon M. Brown
Col. Tamara L. Campbell
Col. James W. Lively
Col. Samuel L. Meyer
Col. Michael R. Nakonieczny
Col. Douglas C. Sanders
Col. Matthew W. Tracy

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN1077 AIR FORCE nominations (56) beginning SHELLEY L. ALDRICH, and ending HEATH D. WRIGHT, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of October 19, 2023.

PN1079 AIR FORCE nominations (15) beginning CARL P. BHEND, and ending CHRISTOPHER M. WOLBERT, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of October 19, 2023.

PN1139 AIR FORCE nomination of Mauricio De Castro Pretelt, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of November 6, 2023.

PN1271 AIR FORCE nominations (43) beginning JULIA M. BELL, and ending RYAN K. ZARNOWSKI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2024.

PN1273 AIR FORCE nominations (303) beginning CHERYLENE S. ABALOS, and ending CHENG ZENG, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2024.

PN1276 AIR FORCE nominations (30) beginning DAVID Y. AHN, and ending JOHN M. VANN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2024.

PN1277 AIR FORCE nominations (143) beginning ADAM H. ALTMAN, and ending JASON M. ZHAO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2024.

PN1385 AIR FORCE nomination of Heidi L. Clark, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 25, 2024.

PN1386 AIR FORCE nomination of Christopher C. Lazidis, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 25, 2024.

PN1418 AIR FORCE nomination of Agatha C. Graves, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

PN1419 AIR FORCE nominations (2) beginning MARK D. JOHNSON, and ending JOHN PAUL F. MINTZ, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

IN THE ARMY

PN1387 ARMY nomination of Sara V. Turinsky, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 25, 2024.

PN1390 ARMY nominations (106) beginning ALAN L. ADKISSON, and ending 002668953, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 25, 2024.

PN1420 ARMY nomination Brandon D. Howard, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

PN1421 ARMY nomination of Thomas P. Gallagher, Jr., which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

PN1422 ARMY nomination of Jeffrey A. Banks, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

PN1423 ARMY nomination of Jonathan C. Young, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

PN1280 MARINE CORPS nominations (7) beginning SEAN P. DILLON, and ending JOSHUA B. SIMPSON, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 8, 2024.

IN THE NAVY

PN1303 MARINE CORPS nomination of Kenneth J. Schneider, Jr., which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 10, 2024.

IN THE NAVY

PN1393 NAVY nomination of Rockford D. Burton, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 25, 2024.

PN1424 NAVY nomination of Donny L. James, II, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 6, 2024.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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 TOM SKILLING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there are many things that Chicagoans disagree on: deep-dish or tavern style, Cubs or Sox, gardeniera or sweet peppers. But one thing that Chicagoans have in common? They get their weather from Tom Skilling. For 45 years, Tom has been the authoritative source on all things weather in Chicago. And after nearly five decades of forecasting snow, sleet, sun, and storms, today was his last day on air.

A native of Aurora, Tom began his career at the almost unbelievable age of 14. He held a series of radio and television jobs throughout Illinois and then studied meteorology and journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In August 1978, Tom joined WGN, and it is not hyperbole to say Chicago's weather forecasts have never been the same since.

As a meteorologist, Tom gave weather forecasts to his viewers. But he was