

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of April M. Perry, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

#### TRIBUTE TO CINDY HERRLE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for 2 weeks now, I have come to the floor to continue thanking my staff in the Republican leader office publicly for their outstanding and ongoing work.

Over the years, I have been very fortunate to have so many tremendously talented individuals helping me tend to the duties of the leader. But just as I am grateful that so many have decided to join our team, I am even more gratified by how few have decided to leave.

Since I became leader, my office here in the Capitol has been steered by just two chiefs of staff. We have had just two communication directors, two national security advisers, three legal counsels—just to name a few examples. It has been a bit like managing a baseball team with a franchise player in every single position—every one of them marked by loyalty, professionalism, and genuine expertise.

So, today, I would like to single out members of this all-star team of policy advisers. I will begin with my senior adviser on appropriations, Cindy Herrle.

My entire team misses Cindy around the office, but the wealth of institutional expertise she lent to our efforts more than earned her the right to close out a distinguished chapter on Capitol Hill. She retired earlier this year.

Cindy joined my team with about the most impressive resume in senior congressional leadership you could possibly have: House committee work, two Speakers of the House, and a Senate whip. Suffice it to say: She knows her stuff.

Cindy's experience gave her a sixth sense of spotting issues along the way or anticipating pitfalls and helping us all avoid them.

She knows the arcane mechanics of budgets and appropriations. She knows the people who write them, edit them, and pass them. And her understanding of both Chambers gives her and anyone fortunate to have her in their corner a macro view of the process of funding the government.

I know my team was especially grateful for Cindy's skills as a "House whisperer," so to speak. She was our forecaster for legislative prospects across the Capitol, a trusted liaison with the lower Chamber, whenever it came time to get important bicameral efforts across the finish line.

And even in the most stressful moments, Cindy knew how to cut the tension, donning her trusty "good luck" sunglasses or inviting colleagues to enjoy her annual Dolly Parton Advent calendar.

Cindy can look back with pride both for delivering excellence in difficult circumstances and for making so many friends all along the way.

But I am confident that Cindy's dearest relationship on the Hill was the parallel service of her brother Patrick, who is in the Capitol Police.

I am grateful to each of them for their decades of devoted service. Thank you, Cindy.

#### TRIBUTE TO JIM NEILL

Mr. President, I have found humor in what my good friend Lamar Alexander used to say about the job of being leader of the Senate. He said:

It is a little bit like being a groundskeeper at a cemetery. Everyone is under you, but no one is listening.

Truth is, in a place like the Senate, we can only be effective by rowing in the same direction with folks who share our principles. And for 7 years, the senior adviser helping me build and maintain conservative coalitions has been the youngest son of a big Irish-Catholic family from Detroit.

Jim Neill's roots taught him what is worth standing for and how to get a noisy room to listen to him. In meetings of my staff, all Jim has to do to get our attention is simply stand up.

But his engagements further afield draw on Jim's other strengths: authenticity, candor, a political weather vane with a dead read on gathering changes, and a principled compass that points true north.

I can't begin to tell you how many times important Senate accomplishments have nearly died on the launch pad but for Jim's deft and diplomatic touch.

Like many of our fellow travelers, Jim credits President Reagan with an outsized role in forming both his interest in politics and his conservative principles.

But I suspect that fewer conservatives of Jim's generation would use the next breath to credit legendary Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards with forming his style and good taste.

Around the office, my team's resident rock and roll historian doles out wicked humor and curmudgeonly quips in equal measure. But Jim's colleagues know him most of all as a trusted friend, a big brother, whose advice and perspective ring true.

Of course, credit for Jim's ability to wrestle thorny issues on a daily basis goes to his wife Erin, who keeps him grounded, and to his kids Maggie and Patrick, who I know make him extraordinarily proud. So thank you, Jim, so much.

#### TRIBUTE TO STEPHANIE PARKS

Mr. President, now the space Jim shares with several colleagues is among the liveliest in my office, and that is due in no small part to my senior advisor on healthcare policy, Stephanie Parks. We just call her "Sparks."

Sparks is responsible for a portfolio that few people in Washington fully understand but which none of us can afford to get wrong. It is a lot like playing left tackle, and I always want the best covering my back.

As it turns out, identifying the best wasn't that difficult. In the world of healthcare policy, Sparks's reputation is unmatched. She is among the most highly regarded policy professionals in Washington.

She can sew up a tough deal like no other. And when the job requires dashing hopes or breaking china, she is somehow able to do that with a smile and with her universal admiration still intact.

Needless to say, everyone in Washington would be eager to bring Sparks's talent on board. Fortunately for me, I wasn't the only one who was eager to make sure she landed here. In fact, no less a former boss than Speaker of the House Ryan made frequent calls to my office to make sure we hired her.

Well, the Speaker was right, and I have been so grateful for Sparks's knack for making sense of complex policy developments, keeping me apprised of the ever-shifting tides of important debates.

I know the rest of my team, for their part, are grateful for the office's foremost authority on developments in true crime, Formula 1 racing, and Notre Dame football.

And I know that Sparks's professional excellence makes her beloved family, especially her mom Barbara and her many friends, rightly proud.

But since my Louisville Cardinals are headed to South Bend this weekend, I have to close my otherwise unqualified praise with just two words: "Go Cards!"

Sparks, thank you for everything.

#### TRIBUTE TO STEVE DONALDSON

Mr. President, now, as one of so many lawyers in the Senate, I have always been quick to admit to colleagues I wouldn't go to me for a simple will. But I have been fortunate to have counsel on my team who can handle that and a whole lot more.

The first such person I need to thank might very well be a victim of fate. My senior advisor and counsel Steve Donaldson is a proud native Kentuckian, a sharp lawyer, and one of the few experts out there on the intricacies of campaign finance.

Frankly, it is nearly impossible to imagine a situation in which Steve didn't wind up working for me someday. I needed somebody who could keep up on this niche issue that I have been immersed in through my entire time in the Senate. In that regard, Steve was an obvious choice.

But over the years, I have come to rely on Steve as so much more than a trusted sounding board on our shared interest in the First Amendment. He is also our resident whiz on the nuances of employment law. It is an important issue to begin with, but it took on massive new importance with the onset of the pandemic a few years ago.

Steve became my team's trusted navigator through the serious public health concerns and rapidly evolving official guidance. At the most consequential time in the unemployment

policy since the Great Depression, Steve was instrumental in shaping the CARES Act, asking questions that others had not considered, and foreseeing challenges in time to tweak our legislative response.

On top of it all, he has carried the unenviable but essential responsibility of ensuring my entire office upholds the highest standards of professional ethics. The team looks forward with pained amusement to his annual impression of the Grinch who stole Christmas and with sincere appreciation for his patient counsel that keeps us all in the clear.

Steve is the consummate professional at everything—that is, except golf. Perhaps I can accept the blame for keeping him too busy at the office to play more often.

Steve's pride in Kentucky roots is, more than anything, a pride in his family. I know he makes his mother Kathy, his sister Annie, and his niece and nephew very, very proud. So, Steve, thank you so much.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE FRAGOSO

Mr. President, next is my chief counsel Mike Fragoso. Like so many of the well-qualified jurists he has helped to put on the Federal courts over the years, Mike—or “Frag” is what we call him—came with an Ivy League pedigree and an impressive resume of legal brilliance.

But unlike his peers in black robes, he also carries a reputation as my office sartorial master.

Frag is another member of my staff with a challenging multifaceted mandate. From the judicial confirmation process to matters of criminal justice and border security, I call on Frag to wear many hats. And when the circumstances permit, he pairs them with three-piece suits.

Seriously, it is a job that draws on every bit of Frag's experience traveling the width of Republican politics from Jeff Flake to CHUCK GRASSLEY and plumbing the depth of conservative jurisprudence.

Frag is equally at home in the high-minded philosophical discourse of the legal community and the urgent pragmatism of Congressional dealmaking.

He is so exceptionally competent that he often produces from his desk the work that would normally require, literally, teams of outside counsel.

Frag stands on deeply held principles but maintains a firm grasp on the realm of the possible. He is willing to exhaust creative effort and sacrifice holidays to make headway against even the most intractable problems. He knows which screws to twist to hold misbehavior and miscarriage of justice to account.

Fighting the good fight can be draining, especially when the good guys come up emptyhanded. But much to his colleague's delight, Frag never misses an opportunity to elicit much-needed laughs and self-effacing humor with gag gifts he seemingly produces from thin air.

I am certain he showers his wife Ashley and their daughters Maria, Aurelia, and Helena with similar joy and even greater pride than he has for his noble work.

Frag, Frags, thanks for everything.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT KAREM

Mr. President, there is a certain irony in the fact that many years ago my team found a kid who would end up as my fiercest adviser in the cause of restoring American hard power working in the world of American soft power.

In those earliest days, my fellow Kentuckian Robert Karem frequently found himself driving me around town doing important events.

These days, however, as my national security adviser, I frequently send Robert to the ends of the Earth and to the seats of foreign governments as a trusted representative of the entire Senate.

Of course, there was a period in between when I had to exercise some strategic patience, and I am not referring to the moments when classified meetings make Robert difficult to reach. I mean that his talents couldn't be contained.

And over the years, they have landed him in the service of a veritable who is who of Republican foreign policy luminaries. I am certain that each of them found, as I did, a deep intellect and appetite for knowledge, a relentless focus on worthy causes, and a passion for advancing them that simmered just beneath the surface.

Certainly, this last bit represents a compromise between Robert's experiences in the boiling cauldron of the House and his appreciation for the cooling saucer of the Senate.

When Robert returned to my office 6 years ago, I handed him a portfolio full of tough problems with no easy solution. It demands that he juggle the urgent and the important; the big picture and the smallest detail; the security of the Senate in moments of unprecedented crisis; and the enduring credibility of America's commitments in the world.

Robert knows how to advance the ball in international settings with cosmopolitan tact, meet naivete and incompetence around Washington with righteous ire, and defuse office monotony with strikes of high yield, precision-guided humor.

I am grateful for all of it and for the loyalty and dedication that should make his family, his Commonwealth, and his Nation very, very proud. Thank you, Robert.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN CHAPUIS

Mr. President, now, folks all around the Senate appreciate this body's cooling saucer of a reputation, but no one embodies it like my senior adviser on commerce and tax policy, John Chapuis.

To be sure, “Chappy” cut his teeth with our former colleague Tom Coburn, who prided himself on playing an active and assertive role out here on the

floor. And his work in the Whip's office under Senator CORNYN dropped him straight into the middle of vote-counting chaos.

But that pedigree did nothing if not make Chappy a master of Senate rules and procedure; and with that mastery comes a calm, collected assurance, the composure of a recovering collegiate athlete, the competence of a Senate expert at the top of his game.

Chappy's path through the Senate has earned him a well-deserved reputation as a Swiss Army knife. He can cite Senate rule, chapter and verse, with the most seasoned cloakroom staff. He can carry the day on consequential nominations with deep-dive background research. And, of course, most recently, he can keep me sharp, parsing tariff disputes and employment reports with equal ease.

In the proudest tradition of an institution where Senators once relied on much smaller staffs, Chappy is the utility player every team wishes it had.

Of course, the team that can claim Chappy's proudest allegiance is the one he has built with his wife Suzanne, herself a distinguished member of the Senate family in the Chaplain's office. As I understand it, the wonderful story that now includes two young sons, Sullivan and Fielding, began with a proposal at the top of the Capitol dome. I am just grateful the Republican leader's office gets to be a part of it.

Chappy, thank you so much.

TRIBUTE TO ERICA SUARES

Mr. President, I can't help but wonder how many of the industries and constituencies seeking the ear of my office on any given day know that my senior adviser responsible for business coalitions is also a watercolor painter whose work adorns the invitations my colleagues receive to our annual Kentucky Derby lunch or whether Erica Suarez's former colleagues at Coastal Living magazine have followed along as her reputation as consummate adviser has reached every corner of the uppermost echelons of Republican politics—Jim DeMint, to MITT ROMNEY, to me.

Erica's innate talents for diplomacy and coordination are undeniable. For more than a decade, I have trusted Erica to relay important guidance around the Republican conference and build consensus across business and advocacy groups. She is charismatic, perceptive, and highly intelligent. In the heat of battle, she has been known to forgo sleep for days.

But the depth of Erica's commitment and the breadth of her professional accomplishments are a testament to something else—a genuine, friendly warmth that is downright difficult to sustain in a town like Washington.

As much as she excels at tending relationships with stakeholders across the Senate and private sector, Erica tends relationships with her colleagues with the utmost care. She takes it upon herself to welcome new arrivals, to celebrate birthdays with requisite