

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Sarah French Russell, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, the historic comeback victory for President Donald J. Trump earlier this month was one for the ages. His overwhelming victory sent a clear message to the “uniparty” here in Washington, DC, mainstream media, globalists, and elites that Americans are fed up with the agenda that was crammed down their throats the last 4 years.

A majority of voters decided that the “America First” agenda championed by Donald Trump and JD Vance is the playbook for American greatness.

As a part of that playbook, President Trump has already put together a strong—very strong—list of qualified Cabinet members.

At Defense, he has tapped Pete Hegseth, a veteran who served two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, is Ivy League educated, businessman background—that is what we need in the Pentagon right now to restore order and our finances.

At HHS, he has assigned Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., who has singlehandedly brought attention to the many public health crises facing Americans.

He is Harvard-educated, has authored multiple books, and has a four-decade career in public health and environmental law.

And as Attorney General, he has nominated Matt Gaetz, a qualified attorney who has served in Congress for nearly a decade. Matt Gaetz has been a warrior for the Constitution on the Judiciary Committee and has exposed the weaponization of the justice system of the DOJ.

Ask yourself: Why are my Democratic colleagues, the media, and the establishment losing their minds over these highly qualified nominees? It is because of the dislike of President Trump, the “America First” agenda, and nearly 80 million Americans who voted to send him back to the White House. It is obvious. Panic has set in at the DOJ, the intelligence community, and the entire DC swamp. They are finding out—as Barack Obama said—the elections have consequences. Americans have spoken. Not only did President Trump win the electoral college in a landslide, he also is the first Republican in two decades to win the popular vote.

In addition to sending President Trump back to the White House, Americans delivered a mandate to every single Senate Republican: They want

President Trump’s “America First” agenda, and they want it now.

As a result, Senate Republicans should embrace this mandate and support every single one of President Trump’s Cabinet picks.

You would think this would be a no-brainer. Not one Democrat broke from their party in supporting Joe Biden’s nominees in 2021—not one. However, over the last few days, I have heard some of my Senate Republican colleagues express concerns about who President Trump is picking for his team.

I would expect this from my colleagues on the left, not on the right. What is surprising to me is that I am hearing grumbings from Republicans. My advice to them is to get on board or get out of the way. The American people have enthusiastically trusted President Trump and J.D. VANCE with saving our great Republic.

I am calling on my Senate Republican colleagues to listen to both the American people and the constituents in their States and support President Trump’s vision for his Cabinet.

Last time around, the Republican Senate took months to confirm President Trump’s appointments, if not years. As a result, President Trump had to govern with one hand tied behind his back because some of his Cabinet members were never confirmed.

That is completely unacceptable this time around. We need to help President Trump. We need to help him usher in a new golden age in America. Be a team player. It is time to move the ball down the field.

You know, I spent many years as a head coach at several different football programs. Whenever an organization brings on a new coach, that coach brings in his whole new staff. It is the head coach’s obligation to hire the personnel he needs to achieve his objectives for that certain program.

The old staff, by and large, usually gets fired. It is not always fun, but that is reality. I had to do it several times. In the same way President Trump was just chosen to be America’s head coach, he needs to be able to hire the assistant coaches he wants. In this case, it is his Cabinet and other important high-level personnel picks.

President Trump has faced two assassination attempts, partisan lawfare from a corrupt administration, his first campaign being spied on by the Obama administration, and baseless lies from the corporate media who tried their best—tried their best—to keep him out of the White House.

The last thing he needs is obstruction from Senate Republicans. He is a large part of why we just won the Senate and a lot of these people got re-elected.

And 76 million Americans decisively chose President Trump and his “America First” agenda—76 million. This is a record for any Republican President in our Nation’s history. Let that sink in.

This is not because of any of us. This is because of President Trump, who is

the most effective communicator and leader in modern history. It is because he is a successful businessman, not a career politician.

But now, elected Republicans are expressing frustration with his Cabinet picks. Who do Republican Senators think they represent? They are representing the voters in their States.

I remember when 20—that is right—20 Senate Republicans voted to confirm Merrick Garland for the top law enforcement spot 4 years ago for the Biden administration. That is their prerogative.

As Attorney General, Merrick Garland turned the DOJ into a weapon—a weapon—against President Donald Trump, Republicans, and law-abiding U.S. citizens.

The perversion of law that Merrick Garland embraced at the DOJ would make third-world banana republics blush.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who had no previous experience in the transportation sector, received 36—and I repeat—36 Republican votes. His qualifications for the job? His “personal love of transportation.” OK. Apparently, liking trains as a kid makes him qualified to be in the Cabinet.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who was in large part responsible for the blatant lies pushed in a letter written by 51 former intelligence officials right before the 2020 election, received 28 Republican votes in the Senate.

Secretary of Education Cardona received 14 Republican votes. Secretary Cardona supported mandatory COVID vaccines for schoolchildren of all ages. He doesn’t believe parents should have any say in their children’s education; it is up to the teachers. He has also directed his department to destroy—and I will repeat—destroy title IX and allow men to compete in women’s sports. In my opinion, that is a total disgrace. And he had 14 Republicans who voted for him here on this floor to confirm him.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, a Green New Deal and Medicare for All career politician, received several Republican Senators’ votes.

I could go on and on and on. But I am not going to do that. Many Senate Republicans had no issue voting to confirm the Democrat nominations. And that is their prerogative—even though many were unqualified, radical, and, in some cases, completely out of their minds. I am not going to get into that. Yet many Republicans have been quick to voice concerns about the competency and qualifications of some of President Trump’s picks. It makes no sense.

I have heard concerns about nominees’ personal lives being a focus point. Need I remind my colleagues of Rachel Levine, a transgender woman, who is the Assistant Secretary of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services. Multiple Republicans voted for her. And that is their prerogative.

Or Tracy Stone-Manning, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, who was literally a member of an ecoterrorist organization that spiked trees with metal rods to harm lumberjacks when they cut into the tree with a chain saw. She was confirmed.

Or Sam Brinton, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Nuclear Energy, who repeatedly stole women's luggage at airports while traveling on the taxpayers' dime. I didn't hear a peep from Democrats or the mainstream media about these disastrous picks.

So let me ask my colleagues this: If Democrats won the Senate, the House, and the White House, do you think a single Democrat would be going against KAMALA HARRIS nominations? Absolutely not. Senate Democrats would green-light every single one of KAMALA HARRIS's Cabinet picks without giving it a second thought.

That is their prerogative. Democrats, they get in line. That is what they do. They did it for Biden, and they would have done it for the Harris administration. And believe me, none of her Cabinet nominees or other high-level staff would be any more credentialed, qualified, or morally upright than President Biden's picks.

To my Republican colleagues, remember that the media hates Donald Trump—I think we all admit that—and they will do anything to sink his nominees and stop his agenda. The media will do everything it can to keep America from getting back on track. The media doesn't care when extreme leftists get important roles in a Democrat administration. They don't care. The media doesn't care when establishment figures from either political party gets jobs. The media only whips into a frenzy when an "America First" candidate gets the nod. The media only pretends to care about qualifications, credentials, and character when their power is being threatened.

So I encourage my Senate colleagues to listen to the media about as much as the American people did this election: not one bit. The mainstream media has been completely discredited after this election. Treat them as such.

We need to trust that President Trump is picking the right people for the job. That is his job. We should defer to him on who he thinks is the best for each position. Of course, we should review his nominations, as the Senate always does. That is our job. But don't forget that the American people gave us a mandate—gave us a mandate. Don't lose sight of the moment and critical situation that our country is presently in.

The American people don't want us infighting about nominees. We have a lot more to do than that. They want us focused, instead, on passing President Trump's agenda.

If his nominees can't do the job down the road, along with President Trump, we will be addressing that. I promise you that. But until then, we need to

support whomever President Trump wants on his team. Senate Republicans should be thanking President Trump for helping us take back the majority here on this floor in the Senate.

We have a country to save. No more playing games. I, for one, am playing for keeps. I encourage my colleagues to think the same way. Every single one of President Trump's Cabinet nominees should be confirmed. No question. We must save the United States from a total collapse at the hands of the globalist-socialist Democrats who have run our country into the ground for the last 4 years. I have personally witnessed it right here on this floor.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

NOMINATION OF REBECCA L. PENNELL

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I was very proud to recommend Judge Rebecca Pennell to serve as a U.S. district court judge in the Eastern District of Washington, and I was honored to introduce her at her confirmation hearing, where she demonstrated her extensive legal knowledge and deep commitment to making sure equal justice is there for all who come to her courtroom. I am thrilled to rise today to strongly urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting for her confirmation.

I want to emphasize—especially for my colleagues across the aisle—that, just like the other nine Federal judges we have confirmed at my recommendation, Judge Pennell has been vetted and endorsed by my State's non-partisan judicial merit selection committee. This is a committee that is made up of both Democratic and Republican legal experts.

A review of Judge Pennell's record and the many letters of recommendation that came with her nomination make it easy to see why the committee put her name forward. In letter after letter, people from different perspectives—prosecutors, law enforcement officials, judges, and many others—described Judge Pennell with the same high praise: fair, insightful, professional, prepared. In other words, she is a qualified and deserving pick to entrust with upholding our Nation's laws and protecting our citizens' rights.

I am especially pleased to say that Judge Pennell's roots in Washington State run as deep as her impressive legal knowledge. She grew up in Richland, where her father worked at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. She attended the University of Washington, returned from Stanford Law to clerk for District Court Judge Whaley in Spokane, and has been an active and respected member of our State's legal community ever since.

It is important that we have a court system that delivers justice for everyone, not just the powerful and well connected. We have to make sure every person has their rights protected and no person is above the law. That requires a judge who carefully reviews each case on its merits, shows a deep

understanding of the law and respect for everyone who appears before them, and appreciates how their decisions will affect the lives of people across Washington State. Some of the best and brightest legal minds in Washington State have made clear they think Judge Pennell is exactly that kind of judge. And having viewed her record, I completely agree and strongly urge my colleagues to join me in voting to confirm her.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF SARAH FRENCH RUSSELL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Sarah F. Russell to the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Born in Boston, MA, Russell earned her B.A., magna cum laude, at Yale College in 1998 and her J.D. at Yale Law School in 2002. After graduating from law school, Russell served as a law clerk to the Honorable Michael B. Mukasey on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York from 2002 to 2003 and the Honorable Chester J. Straub on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals from 2003 to 2005. Russell then served as an assistant Federal public defender between 2005 and 2007 in the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Connecticut. In this role, she tried five jury trials to verdict. She then served as director of the Arthur Liman Public Interest Program, lecturer in law, and associate research scholar in law at Yale Law School from 2007 to 2010.

Since 2011, Russell has taught law at the Quinnipiac University School of Law in various roles, including most recently as a professor of law and the director of the legal clinic. Russell's scholarship has primarily centered on topics related to juvenile justice.

The American Bar Association rated Russell as "well qualified," and her nomination is strongly supported by her home State Senators, Mr. BLUMENTHAL and Mr. MURPHY.

Russell is an academic and former Federal public defender whose litigation experience and deep commitment to equal justice will be an asset to the District of Connecticut.

I am proud to support her nomination.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COONS. Mr. 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.

Mr. COONS. I ask unanimous consent that the scheduled vote occur immediately.

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

VOTE ON RUSSELL NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Russell nomination?