

wasn't in his portfolio. If it was really hard and really important, it, of course, would wind up on Scott's desk.

Eventually, as is often the case with the greatest flying aces, it fell to Scott to lead the whole squadron, to marshal the strengths and expertise of my entire team, and to deploy them in pursuit of an outcome. There have been very few outcomes Scott has pursued and not achieved. And that is because he is one of the very few people in Washington who, by their very involvement in an issue, signal that things are probably going to somehow work out.

I am speaking, of course, about Scott's daily arrival to light and tend the fireplace in my chief of staff's office. In meetings anywhere in the Capitol, Scott speaks with my authority but a command of policy nuance and procedural nuance entirely his own.

Without uttering a word, Scott's patrols along the back wall of this Chamber are a sign to our colleagues things are under control—or at least they will be very soon.

Scott, of course, is too modest to acknowledge this. He is too self-effacing to admit the number of times where the price of rescuing must-pass legislation or keeping the Federal Government's lights on has been his nights, his weekends, and his all-hours attention.

For a husband and father with a young family, it is difficult to quantify this sacrifice. It is impossible to overstate how the road to high-stakes government funding agreements has so often been paved with missed swim meets and soccer games and with goodnight calls and bedtime stories over FaceTime illustrated with a Cookie Monster hand puppet.

So I am grateful to Scott's dear wife Katherine for her patience and to Molly and Lauren for sharing their dad with us so often.

There is simply no way to make sense of the quarter century of honorable service Scott has rendered without talking about a certain intangible devotion. You don't stick around that long for the pay. You certainly don't do it for the flexible hours. But if your name is Scott Raab, you might just do it because you love the Senate and believe in the people you work with.

As it so happens, Scott's colleagues over the years have believed in him too. They say that "his input was essential"; that he would be "the person in my will to take care of my kids"; that he "does the right thing the right way"; and that they are "proud to call him [their] friend."

Well, I am as well.

I am going to miss staring down the toughest fights with Scott Raab at my side. But if anyone is entitled to cut the net down and walk out of here satisfied they left it all on the court, it is Scott.

So Scott, thanks for everything.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

FBI BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I served on the Senate Judiciary Committee for

over 20 years, including the last 4 as chairman.

During that time, I voted on thousands of judicial U.S. attorneys, U.S. marshals, and Justice Department nominees.

Every nominee who has gone through our committee—everyone—shares one thing in common, whether nominated by a Democrat or a Republican President, every single nominee has undergone an FBI background investigation—everyone.

President-elect Trump has the right to nominate his preferred candidates for Justice Department and judicial vacancies, but the Judiciary Committee plays a critical role in offering advice and consent on nominations, which includes receiving and reviewing the results of FBI background investigations.

After weeks of reports that President-elect Trump planned to bypass the FBI entirely, it was a relief to hear that the Trump transition team had finally signed an agreement this week to allow the FBI to conduct background investigations.

But I remain concerned about whether President-elect Trump will require all his appointees to undergo the process. Listen to what the New York Times reported:

Despite the signing of the agreement, it remains unclear whether [the] Trump's team plans to send the names of all officials requiring a security clearance or Senate confirmation to the F.B.I. for vetting.

If President-elect Trump's nominees are not required to submit to the same FBI vetting procedure as previous nominees, it makes you wonder what they are hiding.

The practice of the FBI conducting background investigations is not a new idea. The nominations investigations of the President's nominees dates back 70 years to the Eisenhower administration, and it applies to every Senate-confirmed position, including more than 1,200 positions in the executive branch, 900 Federal judicial nominees, 93 U.S. attorney nominees, and 94 U.S. marshal nominees. Every single one is subject to an FBI investigation.

You might ask yourself, Why is it so important to vet all these nominees? Consider the views of Noah Bookbinder and Gregg Nunziata, former Democratic and Republican counsels on the Senate Judiciary Committee, who, on a bipartisan basis, reviewed hundreds of nominees' background investigations. They wrote in the New York Times:

Without nominees being scrutinized by the F.B.I., the danger is that neither lawmakers nor the public would know whether they are trustworthy or have issues that compromise their ability to do the job or [even] their loyalty to the United States.

As Mr. Bookbinder and Nunziata noted in their op-ed:

A nomination was never scheduled for committee consideration without the committee receiving an F.B.I. background check, reviewing it and clearing the nomination to move forward.

By design, positions that require Senate confirmation are of great im-

portance. These individuals make critical decisions that protect America, our national security, and affect many thousands of American lives, including who is investigated, who is charged with a crime, and how the justice system operates.

It is absolutely critical that people nominated to these positions are upstanding citizens who can be trusted with sensitive life-or-death government information, people who will be immune to blackmail or foreign influence and are truly loyal to the United States.

President-elect Trump has reportedly considered using a private investigative firm to conduct these background investigations. That is unacceptable for one basic reason. First, when the nominees submit their paperwork to the FBI as a part of their background investigations, they are on notice that lying or concealing material facts is a felony—a felony. The same goes for individuals who agree to speak with the FBI about nominees' character and fitness. In comparison, there would be no penalties for misleading a private investigative firm.

Second, the FBI's resources in determining if a nominee poses a risk far outweigh any private firm's capabilities. Seasoned agents at the FBI field offices nationwide are deployed to pull records, interview individuals, and report their findings.

Finally, any private firm paid by the Trump transition team would have an unavoidable conflict of interest. They would have an incentive to clear the backgrounds of nominees so they would get more business from the transition team. By contrast, the only motive for FBI agents is honoring their oath to the Constitution.

It is the duty of President-elect Trump to pick nominees of his choosing. It is also the duty of the Senate, under the Constitution, to carefully examine the record of each nominee before this body. To fulfill this constitutional duty of advice and consent on nominations, the Judiciary Committee must continue to receive background investigations conducted by the FBI for every single nominee.

We owe the American people a transparent transition of power, but that is only possible if the incoming administration follows longstanding, established practices ensuring that the President's nominees can be trusted in a position of power.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior executive assistant clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, today the Senate will continue doing what we have been doing all week, working to confirm as many of President Biden's well-qualified judicial nominees as possible.

Yesterday, we confirmed two more district court judges for the Northern District of New York—Anthony Brindisi, a proud son of Utica whom I worked with closely when he was a member of Congress, and Beth Coombe, a trailblazing prosecutor.

Later this morning, we will vote to confirm Sarah Davenport to be district court judge for the District of New Mexico. Following that, we will vote to advance the nominations of two more judges: Tiffany Johnson to be the district court judge for the Northern District of Georgia and Keli Neary to be district court judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

So of the five judges I filed cloture on Monday, we will have confirmed three by the end of today, and we will be very close to confirming the remaining two. While Democrats still hold the majority, we are going to do everything we can to confirm as many judges as we can.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE S. HELMY

Mr. President, now, on Senator HELMY, today we say thank you and farewell to another member of our caucus, the junior Senator from New Jersey, Senator GEORGE HELMY. Senator HELMY will resign this weekend to make way for our new colleague, Senator-elect ANDY KIM, who we are all very excited to get to work with.

In a very short amount of time, Senator HELMY put his name on over 30 pieces of legislation, advocated for children's mental health, stood up for the well-being of the people of New Jersey, across America, and around the world. I would also be remiss if I didn't point out that Senator HELMY never hesitated to preside during pro forma sessions, a thankless but necessary job.

Senator HELMY's service will also be remembered for its historical significance. He was the first Senator from the Coptic Church. Senator HELMY's faith had an immediate and direct impact here in the Senate when he invited His Grace Bishop David of the Diocese of New York and New England to the Senate a few weeks ago to deliver the first ever Senate opening prayer by a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

So Senator HELMY, congratulations on a job well-done. You made New Jersey proud. We wish you and your family the best.

TRIBUTE TO MITT ROMNEY

Mr. President, finally, I wish to pay tribute and say thank you to a colleague from across the aisle, Senator MITT ROMNEY, who delivered his farewell address yesterday. I enjoyed meeting Senator ROMNEY's family, his sons and his wife, at his reception the other night and told him how much I respected him and how much we will miss him in the Senate.

On most issues, Senator ROMNEY and I may have seemed like oil and water. But I have always appreciated him for his decency, his commitment to our country, and his willingness to work in good faith in a bipartisan way when the chance presented itself. And over the last 4 years, we found numerous ways to do just that.

Senator ROMNEY was a good partner with me on COVID relief legislation, despite much opposition from the other side. And he helped build consensus on the infrastructure bill. He also remains a fierce defender of the Ukrainian people.

Finally, I will always appreciate that Senator ROMNEY joined me, alongside Senators ROSEN, KELLY, and CASSIDY, on our mission to Israel in the aftermath of October 7. So thank you, Senator ROMNEY, and I wish you and your family the best in a new chapter in your life.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, a few days ago I sent Senator THUNE a letter asking that we go through the regular advice and consent process. That meant full FBI investigations of every nominee, the Senate be able to look at those, hearings with questions in the Senate on every nominee, and then votes on the floor.

I am glad to see that at least the President-elect's administration is beginning to look at the FBI investigation issue, and that is a small step in the right direction. But we must have them for all nominees, they must be full FBI investigations, and they must be available for Senators to look at. And, of course, the necessity of hearings for each nominee, the necessity of votes on each nominee are just consonant with the advice and consent process that we have done in America for decades and decades and decades under Democratic and Republican Presidents and the like.

I hope there will be no deviation from that grand and useful tradition.

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 proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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.

The Republican whip.

TRIBUTE TO MITT ROMNEY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, one of the drawbacks of the end of a Congress is the need to say goodbye to departing colleagues. We are losing two Republicans this year—Senators MITT ROMNEY and MIKE BRAUN.

MITT gave his farewell remarks yesterday, and they were characteristic of the man I have come to know: humble, faith-filled, patriotic. MITT is what I would call a character guy. He is guided by a moral compass, and he is not afraid to live by it. And in a world

where being religious isn't always highly regarded, he is unapologetic about his faith.

MITT is also a big family guy. Like me, he married up, and he and his wife Ann have shared the good times and the tough times for well now over 50 years of marriage—hard to believe to look at him. But they say children keep you young, and MITT has 5 sons and an incredible 25 grandchildren—a beautiful legacy all on its own.

MITT's professional legacy needs no recounting. He is well known as a successful businessman, a successful Republican Governor of a deep-blue State, and most recently as a successful Senator. He may be leaving us after just one term, but that term was filled with an outsized amount of work, and he has more than earned his retirement.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE BRAUN

Mr. President, in addition to MITT, MIKE BRAUN is leaving us at the end of this Congress, in his case to go and serve as the Governor of Indiana. MIKE is another guy who has had an outsized impact here in the Senate in a short amount of time. In fact, he was named the most effect first-term Republican Senator in the 117th Congress—and no surprise.

It was clear from the beginning that MIKE came here because he wanted to get things done. Now he will bring that same drive and effectiveness—the drive and effectiveness that helped him grow a small business with 15 employees into a national company—to his work as Governor of Indiana. I have no doubt at all that the State will thrive under his leadership.

As I may have told MIKE, "Hoosiers" is one of my top five movies of all time, which has automatically made me a big fan of the Hoosier State. So I look forward to seeing all the great things that are going to happen to Indiana during his tenure. I know he will be incredibly busy as Governor, especially because MIKE is a guy that gives his all to what he does—witness the fact that he has visited all 92 of Indiana's counties every year during his time here in the Senate.

But I hope he will still find time for his beloved mushroom hunting, and I know he will be finding time to spend with his wife Maureen and their four children—three of whom work for the family business—as well as with their seven grandchildren.

MIKE, congratulations on your election as Governor. It has been a pleasure to work with you here in the Senate, and I look forward to seeing all the great things you will do in Indiana.

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 proceeded to call the roll.

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

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