

NOMINATION OF BENJAMIN J. CHEEKS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Benjamin Jerome Cheeks to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

Born in Albany, GA, Judge Cheeks earned his B.A. from the University of Miami in 2000 and his J.D. from the Washington College of Law at American University in 2003.

Judge Cheeks began his career in public service as an assistant district attorney in the New York County District Attorney's Office from 2003 to 2010. Cheeks then served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California between 2010 and 2013.

Prior to joining the bench, he worked as a criminal defense attorney at his own firm from 2013 to 2024. As a member of the Criminal Justice Act panel, Judge Cheeks was regularly assigned to represent indigent defendants, and those cases comprised 98 percent of his caseload.

Since July of 2024, Judge Cheeks has served as a magistrate judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California.

Judge Cheeks enjoys the strong support of both of his home State Senators, and the American Bar Association unanimously rated him as "qualified" to serve on the district court.

Having served as a prosecutor, defense attorney, and Federal magistrate judge, Judge Cheeks is well prepared to serve as a district judge in the Southern District of California.

I am proud to support his nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Murillo cloture motion be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON CHEEKS NOMINATION

All postcloture time has expired.

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

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from California (Mr. SCHIFF) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE: The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 330 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schumer
Booker	Kelly	Shaheen
Brown	Kim	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Lujan	Tester
Casey	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	
Heinrich	Rosen	

NAYS—47

Barrasso	Fischer	Murkowski
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Braun	Hagerty	Risch
Britt	Hawley	Romney
Budd	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young
Ernst	Mullin	

NOT VOTING—4

Manchin	Schiff
Rubio	Vance

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DURBIN). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks prior to the next rollcall vote.

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

END OF THE 118TH CONGRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is not entirely clear yet how or when Congress will conclude its end-of-the-year business. But when the Senate does adjourn, I will just about mark the end of my tenure as the Republican leader.

I have made it clear this year that our colleagues haven't seen the last of me. I still fully intend to keep frustrating my critics in the years ahead. But while I still command this particular podium, I thought I might make a few observations I have picked up along the way.

Folks come to Washington to do one of two things: either to make a point or to make a difference—to make a point or to make a difference. It is usually not that hard to tell who is doing which, especially in situations like the one we are in right now.

The people who are here to make a difference recognize pretty quickly you never get everything you want, but, often, you can get quite a lot. And the folks who prefer to make a point have a funny habit of reminding us out loud how poorly they understand that fact.

I don't care to count how many times I have reminded our colleagues—and our House counterparts—how harmful it is to shut the government down and how foolish it is to bet your own side won't take the blame for it.

Recent history doesn't leave a whole lot of room for interpretation on this one: When you try to use normal government function as a bargaining chip, you pay a political price.

That said, if I took it personally every time my advice went unheeded, I probably wouldn't have spent as long as I have in this particular job. Getting a legislative outcome in the Senate requires large majorities of people who don't share all of the same views to actually work together toward outcomes where they do see eye to eye.

We have had divided government here most of the time I have been in this job; neither side has owned the place. You have a choice: Do nothing or try to find things you can agree on and do them together.

With the exception of just one short period of a few months, this place hasn't seen a filibuster-proof Senate in 50 years. Getting things done almost inevitably requires dealing with a lot of people who disagree with you on most things.

And in the interests of stable, enduring outcomes, that is actually a good thing. Anyone who comes to the Senate hoping for a rigid, hard-line conformity and prompt action is barking up the wrong tree.

I have heard folks who like making a point, they would rather serve with 30 colleagues who all agree than with a majority who didn't. So if you want to accomplish absolutely nothing—nothing—sign up with the group that would rather serve with 30 people who all agree than those who have differences.

Everyone I know who is interested in making a difference understands pretty quickly that it requires that kind of interaction in order to achieve something.

Leading means letting folks take a walk when they need to and rallying together when we need to. I have been so grateful over the years to lead majorities that embrace these necessary rhythms. I am gratified by the trust they have placed in me, repeatedly, to determine what that moment requires. And I am so proud of the outcomes we have achieved for our country.

I am looking forward to spending the next Congress as a member of another majority in a set of capable hands. I am rooting hard for my friend JOHN THUNE and the leadership team our conference has assembled around him. There will be no shortage of important work to do, and I will stand ready to do my part.

Back in 2007, my first day in this job, I told our colleagues:

The Senate has no claim on greatness unless its power is put to great ends.

And I stated my view that "the first duty of government is the defense and protection of its citizens." The Senate

is great, and so is the Nation that it represents. But today, our Nation faces one great challenge from forces betting on our decline. And so that first duty of government is the task to which I will devote my efforts in the coming years.

Our prosperity and security depend on an order forged by American leadership and American strength—both of which require our urgent attention.

The arsenal of democracy must be restored. Peace through strength must, once again, actually mean something other than just a slogan, and I am going to do everything in my power to help continue this to be the greatest country in the world.

No one can do what we do internationally, and that is where I am going to put my focus for the next 2 years.

Thank you all for the opportunity. (Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I just listened to my friend Leader MCCONNELL deliver what may be his final remarks on the Senate floor as Republican leader. Today, I want to wish him and his family my very best as he prepares to serve in this Chamber in a different role next year.

Everyone knows Leader MCCONNELL and I had plenty of disagreements over the years on matters of policy and politics, but when the time was right, we found ways to work together to get very important things done for this country.

Today, I would like to acknowledge and thank him for those moments. We worked together, for example, to pass the national security supplemental to stand with our friends in Ukraine, to hold the line against Vladimir Putin, and safeguard America's national security interests around the world. I appreciate his commitment to these principles no matter who occupies the Oval Office.

We also worked together in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic to get the CARES Act done, and in the aftermath of the Capitol attack on January 6, Leader MCCONNELL worked with me and the other leaders to bring the Senate back into session so we could finish the job of certifying the 2020 election.

These are just a few of the examples showing how two very different leaders found common ground to move things forward. In each instance, Leader MCCONNELL's actions benefited our country.

So I thank him for those moments. I wish him, his wife Elaine, and his entire family our best wishes, and I know all of my colleagues on our side of the aisle join me in those best wishes and respect.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the

Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 850, Serena Raquel Murillo, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Catherine Cortez Masto, Debbie Stabenow, Patty Murray, Amy Klobuchar, Chris Van Hollen, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Andy Kim, Margaret Wood Hassan, Elizabeth Warren, Christopher A. Coons, Adam B. Schiff, Jeff Merkley.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Serena Raquel Murillo, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from California (Mr. SCHIFF) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE)

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 47, as follows:

(Rollcall Vote No. 331 Ex.)

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schumer
Booker	Kelly	Shaheen
Brown	Kim	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Lujan	Tester
Casey	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Ossoff	Welch
Fetterman	Padilla	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	
Heinrich	Rosen	

NAYS—47

Barrasso	Fischer	Murkowski
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Ricketts
Braun	Hagerty	Risch
Britt	Hawley	Romney
Budd	Hoeben	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Tuberville
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Daines	Moran	Young
Ernst	Mullin	

NOT VOTING—4

Manchin	Schiff
Rubio	Vance

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 47.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Serena Raquel Murillo, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN, Junior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Junior. Thanks for the correction.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT LOCATION ACT

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 1318, the Women's Suffrage National Monument Location Act, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1318) to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, and for other purposes.

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

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Ms. BALDWIN. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 1318) was passed.

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, I rise today to speak to the Women's Suffrage National Monument Location Act to designate the Women's Suffrage National Monument be built on the National Mall.

I was proud to introduce this bill with Senator BLACKBURN, as she and I represent both the first and the final States to ratify the 19th Amendment and grant women the right to vote across the Nation.

The National Mall honors some of the most important features of our shared American story. Conspicuously