

home, we are going to have to make up the supply from abroad, most likely from hostile nations or volatile areas of the world. As European countries learned the hard way after Russia invaded Ukraine, relying on hostile nations for your energy supply is not a winning proposition.

Plus, foreign production can be far less environmentally friendly than producing oil and gas here at home.

One of the best things that we can do for our national security is to ensure that we have a stable, reliable, and affordable domestic energy supply.

Fortunately, the Biden administration is being supplanted by the Trump administration, and I know that President Trump is committed to reversing President Biden's anti-conventional energy policies and unleashing American energy production.

Hopefully, it will be possible to undo much of the damage that President Biden has done and set us up for a secure energy future. But it is worth reflecting on what might have been—and could be again—if we don't have a Congress and a President committed to conventional, as well as renewable, energy development.

I hope that future administrations—Democrat, as well as Republican—will make American energy security a priority.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, the Senate began holding hearings for the President-elect's nominees to serve in his Cabinet.

This morning, the Senate Armed Services Committee heard testimony from Pete Hegseth to serve as Secretary of Defense. Few nominees will face the kind of troubling questions that Mr. Hegseth faced going into today's hearing. He is, by outward appearance, woefully unfit for a job like Secretary of Defense. Unfortunately for Mr. Hegseth, his testimony thus far has failed to address the disturbing questions that plague his nomination. It appears Mr. Hegseth's strategy is to follow the five d's of dodgeball: dodge, duck, dip, dive, and dodge.

Mr. Hegseth failed to explain, for one, why someone with his lack of qualifications should be entrusted to lead our Armed Forces. Why should

America entrust our military to a television personality who has never led any large organization? It is a huge organization, DOD. He hasn't come close to having any of that kind of administrative experience. We didn't hear any good answer to that question.

Mr. Hegseth also failed to answer for his deeply flawed history of financial and organizational mismanagement. Why should he be the one entrusted to manage the Pentagon's budget? Again, no good answer.

When asked about his comments as recently as 2 months ago, when he claimed that "we should not have women in combat roles," he had no good answers.

Finally, Mr. Hegseth failed to assure us he has the temperament for the job. His history of excessive drinking is troubling for someone seeking to lead our military, and his reflexive defiance against the allegations regarding sexual assault undermines his credibility.

If Mr. Hegseth had nothing to hide about his past, then it shouldn't be a problem for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee to allow all committee members to review all FBI background documents, but today, Chairman WICKER rejected this reasonable request by Ranking Member REED to let committee members review Mr. Hegseth's past. Again, if there is nothing to hide about Mr. Hegseth, why is the chairman hell-bent on keeping all relevant information out of the hands of his colleagues? To dismiss the allegations against Mr. Hegseth but then reject full transparency is odd at best, dangerous at worst. It reeks of something hiding in the dark.

Being Secretary of Defense demands discipline, character, and restraint. Mr. Hegseth's history shows he is deficient in all these qualities, and so far, his hearing has not changed that.

Mr. President, now on the noms tomorrow, Mr. Hegseth is not the only nominee testifying this week who must answer for a disturbing record. The number of people with disturbing records who have been nominated—some of them are good nominees, but the number with disturbing records and histories—I don't think I can remember a time in history when we have had that many.

Tomorrow, we will hear from a large collection of nominees, but let's focus on two: Russell Vought to serve as Director of OMB and Chris Wright to serve as Secretary of Energy.

Let me begin with Russell Vought, a key figure in the first Trump administration and one of the chief architects—one of the chief architects—of Project 2025. This man is not just a bystander who supported it; he helped put it together.

No administration on Earth can claim to be pro-worker and then nominate someone like Russell Vought to oversee the Federal Government's budget. Again, you can't be pro-worker and be for Russell Vought. He has spent years—years—pushing for trillions in

cuts to America's social safety net—something that would cause immediate and severe harm to tens of millions of American citizens.

We all know Mr. Vought's history very well. We know his awful and radical record from the first Trump administration. Even after leaving government, Mr. Vought was the go-to authority for the most radical elements of the House GOP, advising them on budgets that punished America's families, seniors, kids, law enforcement, and others with draconian—draconian—budget cuts. His budget cuts weren't just snipping at the edges; they cut to the deep.

Tomorrow, when Vought testifies before the committee, Americans will be reintroduced to his outlandishly extreme agenda. If Project 2025 caused your stomach to turn during the election, Mr. Vought would be a nightmare scenario. If you are among America's working class or from low-income families or from middle-class families working hard to make ends meet, Mr. Vought would be disastrous. If you rely on programs like Medicare or nutrition assistance, Mr. Vought would put those services in danger. On the other hand, if you are among the wealthiest of Americans in this country, Mr. Vought is a wave of good news. He is a staunch advocate of tax cuts for the ultrarich and deregulation for America's mega corporations, even if that means adding trillions to the deficit.

As we will all see tomorrow for ourselves, confirming Mr. Vought would be a disaster for America's working- and middle-class families.

Finally, I would like to say something about President Trump's nominee to serve as Secretary of Energy, Mr. Chris Wright. There is a lot—a heck of a lot—in Mr. Wright's background that should trouble Americans who care about affordable energy and creating good-paying, clean jobs.

Mr. Wright is one of America's wealthiest fossil fuel executives and has a history of sounding like a climate change skeptic. He once said, "There is no climate crisis" and "We have seen no increase in the frequency . . . of hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, and floods." What on Earth is this man talking about? Is he such an ideologue that he doesn't see the truth of the world around him?

Mr. Wright, look over at California right now and say that we haven't had increases in these kinds of problems.

Tomorrow, Mr. Wright must answer for his background and his comments. It is like putting a fox in the henhouse. If you believe in clean energy, you couldn't have a worse nominee.

If confirmed, will Mr. Wright fight to lower costs for American consumers or will he fight to help the bottom line of polluters and oil companies? Will Mr. Wright push policies that build on the progress we made in the Inflation Reduction Act that has created hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of good-paying, clean jobs or will he kill those

jobs because he is such an ideological extremist? If confirmed, will Mr. Wright advance our country into a prosperous, affordable clean energy future or will he take us backward and do the bidding of Big Oil? He must answer these questions and more tomorrow.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators BARRASSO and DURBIN be permitted to complete their remarks prior to the scheduled recess.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the Senate's confirmation process because today Senate committees are beginning their hearings, starting to hear from the nominees from President-elect Donald Trump—qualified nominees.

We are going to hear from many of the nominees this week, and I just heard the minority leader talk about what is happening today because at this very moment, Pete Hegseth is testifying—testifying in the Armed Services Committee. He is the President's nominee to be the Secretary of Defense.

I have been following these hearings closely. Pete Hegseth is giving strong answers to tough questions. He is confident, he is knowledgeable, and he should be confirmed quickly. We have a significant problem in our military with morale and with recruitment, and Pete Hegseth is the right person to address those issues of military readiness.

The incoming administration is ready to act—ready to act and deliver on the historic mandate that President Trump won in November. His victory in the electoral college and the popular vote gives him a mandate—a mandate to undo the damage of the current administration and to unleash new American prosperity.

President Trump understands the old saying that personnel is policy. That is why he nominated his entire Cabinet before Thanksgiving. And it is a strong team. Doug Burgum, Chris Wright, and Lee Zeldin will take the handcuffs off of American energy. MARCO RUBIO and Pete Hegseth and John Ratcliffe will restore American strength. No more weakness from America on the world stage. Scott Bessent will stop the \$4 trillion tax increase. Pam Bondi will stop the weaponization of the Justice Department, and she will actually enforce the law. Kristi Noem will make sure the border is secure.

These nominees are not a return to business as usual. Business as usual gave us painfully high prices. Business as usual gave us wide-open borders. Business as usual gave us the disastrous death of soldiers and the fall of Afghanistan.

These nominees by President Trump are bold choices. They are motivated, they are skilled, and they are committed to the safety and security of every American. Most importantly, they show that President Trump is serious—serious about bringing fresh eyes and a new outlook to Washington, DC. That is exactly what the American people voted for in November.

Senate Republicans are committed to getting President Trump's team in place quickly.

Our committee chairs are working aggressively to give each nominee a fair and speedy consideration. That is how the Senate has operated historically, especially when faced with such a mandate from the American people.

In 2009, the President coming into office, Obama, had seven Cabinet nominees confirmed on his very first day in office. Within 8 days of taking office, he had 14 nominees confirmed. All but five of his nominees in 2009 were confirmed by voice vote. President Trump deserves the same deference.

It is interesting to me to hear the Democrat leader talk about Republicans rushing the process this year. Well, 4 years ago, Senator SCHUMER pledged to hold hearings right away, he said, for President Biden's nominees. He pledged to hold votes on Inauguration Day. He said: It is "traditional for a new President."

Well, I believe Senator SCHUMER was right to move quickly, but now that the shoe is on the other foot, Democrats should work in good faith with us, with the Republicans, to uphold that tradition for President Trump.

I have my doubts. The Democrat leader reportedly told his caucus to create fireworks at this week's hearings of our nominees. Well, we have seen Democrat obstruction before. Due to Senate Democrat obstruction, President Trump had only five nominees confirmed in January during his first term. We saw obstruction for the sake of obstruction.

Americans now have chosen a new direction. They chose this President, and the President's victory was decisive.

Elections have consequences, and the Presiding Officer and I know that. This week, the U.S. Senate is engaging in our constitutional duty of advice and consent.

Advice and consent means to deliberate, to debate. It means giving advice to the nominees, and we are doing that and have done it. But it is no excuse to distract and delay or to slander and then to try to search and destroy.

The Senate is going to follow the mandate of the American people and confirm President Trump's strong nominees. We will do it swiftly. We are committed to working around the clock, including nights and weekends, if Democrats choose to deliberately delay. With this majority, with our new President-elect, we will deliver a new direction for America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Illinois.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, many Senators use this bully pulpit to wax poetic, but only on special occasions do I actually quote poetry.

Today, as I honor my former colleague, friend of several decades, and our Nation's 46th President, it feels appropriate to do so.

History says

Don't hope on this side of the grave

But then, once in a lifetime

The longed-for tidal wave

Of justice can rise up

And hope and history rhyme.

I recited these words—some of President Biden's favorites, by Irish poet Seamus Heaney—on the evening of his inauguration as our Nation's Vice President in 2008. As I reflect on his time in our Nation's highest office, I think it is only right to use these words again.

Over the course of his long service to this country, President Joseph Biden has been the source of hope and an author of history. And just as Heaney observed, he became one of the rare leaders who have made hope and history rhyme. America is better for it.

Over the decades I have known President Joe Biden, he has proven to be one of the finest public servants America has seen.

Coming from humble beginnings, he worked hard and put himself in positions to give back to this Nation that has given so much to him. When it came to making decisions of consequences on issues that mattered most to the American people, Joe Biden put America first.

Through immense personal tragedy, through setbacks and obstacles, President Biden has taken the strength and wisdom he learned from his family, held steadfast on to his faith in America, and gave millions of people in this Nation reasons to hope.

His record as a Senator, while serving as Vice President under Barack Obama, and while sitting behind the Resolute Desk himself speaks for itself.

When future generations hear the name "Joe Biden," they will think of the incredible growth, recovery, and progress America has made under his leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic changed life in America as we knew it. It claimed thousands of American lives per week and brought our economy to a virtual halt.

But thanks to Joe Biden, we recovered from the devastation of this pandemic. We passed the American Rescue Plan to support working families and