

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

businesses and address the public health crisis. This law deployed vaccines to millions of Americans and normalcy returned. In 2020, the world economy was in shambles due to COVID-19. In April 2020, our economy lost nearly 21 million jobs in a single month, and our unemployment rate skyrocketed to 14.7 percent. But thanks to Biden's leadership, many workers were able to get back to work.

Since Joe Biden has taken office, our economy has added 16 million jobs. Twenty million new business applications have been filed, the most in any single Presidential term in history.

And under Joe Biden, unemployment was under 4 percent for the longest stretch in 50 years. Four years ago, "Infrastructure Week" was nothing more than a punch line and a broken promise, but thanks to Joe Biden, we passed a bipartisan infrastructure law that replaced our aging infrastructure and expanded access to clean drinking water and the high-speed internet.

Thanks to Joe Biden, we took historic action to address the climate crisis through the Inflation Reduction Act, the most significant investment in clean energy, sustainability, and climate resilience in America's history. And we guaranteed American leadership in science and technology with the Chips and Science Act, a bipartisan bill bringing semiconductor manufacturing back to America and bolstering our competitiveness for generations.

Because of his leadership, we were able to enact the most significant gun safety legislation passed in nearly 30 years—the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

Thanks to Joe Biden, over \$180 billion—billion dollars—in student loan debt has been forgiven for more than 5 million Americans, giving them, finally, a chance at life. We lowered the cost of prescription drugs, made historic gains in expanding health insurance coverage, and continue to fight for the reproductive rights of all Americans.

History will also remember Joe Biden for the Violence Against Women Act. He wrote the bill. He championed it while in the Senate, bipartisan legislation aimed at making sure every woman can live free from fear, violence, and abuse.

And as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am proud to say that I worked with Joe Biden to confirm 235 judges to the Federal bench under his leadership, including the first African-American woman and former public defender as a member of the Supreme Court, and that is only here at home.

On the global stage, he restored faith in America as a world power, a global leader, and a responsive ally that would not tolerate the post-World War II global order to be undermined by autocrats like Putin. He defended Ukraine, boosted competition with China, and strengthened alliances in the South Pacific. He oversaw the expansion of NATO and its bolstering of

defenses of its Baltic members. But, most importantly, thanks to Joe Biden, the Office of President once again stood for decency, civility, respect, and empathy. I sincerely hope our Nation does not lose sight of these values.

There is no doubt, when it comes to Heaney's words, President Biden's life has imitated art. Throughout his time in public service, President Biden inspired hope in so many millions of people, and in his commitment to ensuring that America lived up to her lofty ideals, he left a legacy that will shape history.

President Biden, it has been an honor to count myself as your colleague and your friend.

On behalf of a grateful nation and the world, I want to say to you—and to Jill and all of your family who shared you with us for so long—thanks for making hope and history rhyme.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:53 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH).

MORNING BUSINESS—CONTINUED

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays before the Senate the certificate of election for the State of West Virginia. The certificate, the Chair is advised, is in the form suggested by the Senate. If there be no objection, the reading of the certificate will be waived and will be printed in full in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the certificate was ordered to be printed in the record, as follows:

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION FOR SIX-YEAR TERM
To the President of the Senate of the United States:

This is to certify that on the Fifth day of November, Two Thousand Twenty-Four, Jim Justice was duly chosen by the qualified electors of the State of West Virginia, a Senator from said State to represent said State in the Senate of the United States for the term of six years beginning on the third day of January, Two Thousand Twenty-Five.

Witness: His excellency our governor, James C. Justice, and our seal hereto affixed at Charleston this Seventeenth day of December, in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

By the governor:

JAMES C. JUSTICE,
Governor.
MAC WARNER,
Secretary of State.

[State Seal Affixed]

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. If the Senator-elect will now present himself

at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator, escorted by Mrs. CAPITO, advanced to the desk of the President pro tempore; the oath prescribed by law was administered by the President pro tempore; and he subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Congratulations, Senator.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The Senator from Texas.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

LAKEN RILEY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 5, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5) to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to take into custody aliens who have been charged in the United States with theft, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune (for Ernst/Grassley) amendment No. 8, to include crimes resulting in death or serious bodily injury to the list of offenses that, if committed by an inadmissible alien, require mandatory detention.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week, I had a chance to lay out some of my top priorities for the new Congress as Republicans take the helm. Today, I want to elaborate on the first of those priorities, which is to confirm President Trump's Cabinet.

Back in November, November 5—it seems like a long time ago, but it was just the other day—Americans went to the polls to elect new leaders, including a President of the United States. Voters made their voices heard as to which direction our country should go because they plainly believed that we were heading in the wrong direction.

As a result of that vote, President Trump won the election decisively. From my perspective, that means he is entitled to his team—absent some extraordinary circumstances—because it is his team or Cabinet that will help him follow through on the promises he made on the campaign trail. Once confirmed, these men and women will then