

reestablishing our military as the most lethal and intimidating force in the world. Under the Trump administration, recruitment has surged to its highest level in 15 years. This is important because history teaches us an important lesson. And what is that lesson? Weakness invites conflict. Strength deters war. When our military is prepared, America is strong and projects strength.

President Trump is also the best chance for peace between Russia and Ukraine. Both Russia and Ukraine must come to an agreement on a lasting cease-fire. President Trump and his administration are pursuing an end to the killing and to the bloodshed.

In the Middle East, peace and prosperity are also necessary. That begins with American support for Israel. The Senate should confirm Governor Mike Huckabee to be America's Ambassador to Israel.

Overall, President Trump is off to a strong start. His swift actions are making America safer and stronger. Fully restoring peace through strength, however, requires congressional action as well. In the Senate, Republicans are preparing legislation to do just that. Republicans will rebuild our military, improve military readiness, expand shipbuilding, and invest in the newest technologies to keep America safe, and that includes an Iron Dome for America. All of this makes our military more lethal.

Americans strongly support these policies. They know that this is the path toward safety and security. Republicans are going to bring back peace through strength. We will get America back on track.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF AARON REITZ

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, it is a distinct honor for me to speak today on behalf of Aaron Reitz as he continues through the confirmation process to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Throughout his career, whether in law, government, or on the battlefield, Aaron has earned the respect and the admiration of all who have had the privilege of working with him.

I have worked closely with Aaron day-to-day, and I can attest to his exceptional career, unrelenting commitment, and strong moral values. He is an ideal candidate for this position.

The Office of Legal Policy is integral to the Department of Justice. It is the cornerstone of the Department's most

significant policy initiatives and serves as a key driver of its legislative and programmatic agendas. OLP plays a critical role in facilitating the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches, particularly regarding legislation, regulations, policies, and judicial appointments.

Aaron possesses the vision, the experience, and the leadership needed to excel in this role, and I have no doubt that he will lead the office with the same dedication he has shown throughout his career.

But before diving into his professional credentials, it is important to highlight that Aaron is more than just an outstanding legal expert. He is a dedicated family man. He is blessed and fortunate to have his wonderful wife Meredith and four beautiful children. All of them have much to be proud of.

Allow me to share a few highlights from Aaron's distinguished career, which demonstrates why he is so well-qualified for the position.

Aaron graduated magna cum laude from Texas A&M University, where he earned the role of Regimental Commander at the Corps of Cadets. Following his education, Aaron served with distinction as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. During nearly 5 years of Active Duty, he deployed to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, where he worked alongside the Afghan National Army, leading logistics in one of the world's most challenging environments. He didn't merely oversee operations from behind a desk; he led from the front, ensuring mission success and safeguarding the lives of our troops in a combat zone.

Aaron then attended law school at the University of Texas, where he served as President of the Federalist Society's student chapter, and he also served as the editor in chief of the Texas Review of Law and Politics, and then he clerked at the Texas Supreme Court.

After completing his military service in law school, Aaron continued his leadership in the legal and public policy fields, working in private practice and later as deputy attorney general for legal strategy in the Office of the Attorney General of Texas. While serving in the Texas Attorney General's Office, Aaron was instrumental in shaping the State's most important legal and policy initiatives.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Aaron stands out for his ability to build consensus, unite people, and navigate complex situations with poise and effectiveness.

I have witnessed this firsthand while he served as my chief of staff here in the Senate. Aaron's contributions have been indispensable in advancing my legislative agenda, which includes securing the U.S.-Mexico border, protecting children from online harm, and expanding our economy through investments in semiconductor manufacturing and tech infrastructure. He also

played a key role in the efforts to build critical bridges across the Rio Grande River, and he was instrumental in shepherding the Justice for Jocelyn Act. His deep involvement with my Judiciary Committee team will serve him well when he is confirmed for this position.

Now to the heart of why Aaron is the best candidate for Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy. OLP is vital to the Department of Justice, as it shapes and executes the Department's most important priorities. Leading this office requires someone with experience managing complex, cross-departmental initiatives, and a proven ability to get things done at the highest level. That is Aaron.

Aaron has a demonstrated ability to lead and coordinate efforts that have meaningful, measurable impacts, whether in the courtroom, on Capitol Hill, or within a broader policy landscape. His extensive experience across legal, governmental, and political sectors, combined with his exceptional team-building skills, make him very well-qualified for this role.

But beyond his professional qualifications, what truly sets Aaron apart is the strength of his character. He is a man of faith, family, and unwavering principles. He stands firm in his commitment to doing what is right, even when faced with challenging circumstances. His integrity is evident in all his actions.

With his leadership, Aaron will be an invaluable partner to Attorney General Pam Bondi. I have every confidence that OLP will continue to advance the Department's most important policy priorities under his guidance, ensuring that they are grounded in justice, fairness, and the rule of law.

I strongly support Aaron Reitz's nomination. He is the right person for this critical role, and I am confident that he will bring the same dedication, leadership, and integrity to the Office of Legal Policy that he has demonstrated throughout his career.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination, and I look forward to the outstanding work Aaron will continue to do in continued service to our Nation.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Reitz nomination.

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

VOTE ON BISHOP NOMINATION

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

Mrs. MURRAY. 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 executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 145 Ex.]

YEAS—53

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

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Reed
Baldwin	Hirono	Rosen
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Hassan	Padilla	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Gallago	Sanders
---------	---------

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). 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.

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 senior assistant 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. 48, Aaron Reitz, of Texas, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

John Thune, Chuck Grassley, James Lankford, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Ashley B. Moody, Ted Budd, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Justice, Steve Daines, Ron Johnson, Josh Hawley, John R. Curtis, Tim Sheehy, Marsha Blackburn, David McCormick, Mike Lee, Rick Scott of Florida.

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 Aaron Reitz, of Texas, to be an Assistant Attorney General, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 146 Ex.]

YEAS—53

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

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Reed
Baldwin	Hirono	Rosen
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Hassan	Padilla	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Peters	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Gallago	Sanders
---------	---------

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 45.

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 Aaron Reitz, of Texas, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here on the floor because we are in a moment of crisis for our veterans. It is a moment of profound historic challenge to the Veterans' Administration, and what we need from Members of this body—and I am encouraged by the response so far—is a call to action. We need a plan for accountability. That is our job—to hold responsible officials who have the obligation and opportunity to serve our veterans at a time when Elon Musk and Donald Trump are slashing and trashing our Veterans' Administration, with real-life impacts on the healthcare and disability benefits that are afforded to our Nation's heroes. It is a disgrace, it is shameful, it is unacceptable, and we need to muster the courage and fortitude on the part of this body to call it out and call it off.

That is why I am here, and it is only the beginning of a plan for accountability that will include others—my colleagues coming to the floor this week and next—as well as hearings that we will organize, shadow hearings—not necessarily formal hearings of the committee but hearings that we will have on aspects of this challenge that call for us to highlight the need for action.

We are going to come to the floor as well to seek unanimous consent on measures that will stop the degrading and decimation of the Veterans' Administration. It is illegal. It is immoral. It is immoral because we have a solemn responsibility—I don't need to make a long speech to tell my colleagues about this responsibility. We recognize it rhetorically all the time. I am here not to make a speech but to have an impact.

Next week, we are going to be voting on the next VA Deputy Secretary nominee, Paul Lawrence, and I just want to be really blunt. I voted for Doug Collins to be VA Secretary. It was a mistake because Secretary Collins has not been forthcoming with facts. He has not been transparent. He has not been responsive to us or to veterans and his employees who are asking questions about what the future of the VA will be given the firing of 80,000 members of the VA workforce, projected, in the next few months without a plan, without a strategy, without any forethought about what its real-life impact will be.

I voted for Doug Collins, and I regret it. I apologize for it. I am not making the same mistake with Paul Lawrence. There is no reason to believe he will be any different—not to mention any better—because he is the Deputy. I have respect for their service in the military, as I do for anyone who has worn the uniform, but I cannot—I cannot—vote for Paul Lawrence. I hope my colleagues will be as vigilant as I am seeking to be in voting against him. I will oppose his nomination.

Since taking office, this administration has shortsightedly shortchanged and systematically betrayed our veterans with policies that are against their interests. The goal here: save money so that tax cuts can be financed—tax cuts for the billionaires and millionaires that populate this administration and drive its policy.

They fired already 2,400 VA employees, many of them high performers. They have been promoted to provisional positions because they have been high performers. They are in those provisional positions for a time when they would become permanently in those positions, but because they are provisional, they have been fired; likewise, the younger members of the workforce who have just been recruited for positions that are open and where their talent is vitally needed. They are the future of our VA, younger VA employees who want to make a career of it, want to serve fellow veterans.