

Minutes" journalist Scott Pelley reported on Owens' resignation and called out Paramount directly. The full story inside Paramount, CBS, and "60 Minutes" remains unclear, and Pelley made clear that Paramount has not killed any "60 Minutes" stories.

But it is difficult to ignore the timing. This is how modern censorship creeps into newsrooms. It doesn't require book burning or secret raids. It requires weaponizing existing government authority to pressure the multinational corporations with diverse financial interests that run storied programs like "60 Minutes."

This is a five-alarm fire for democracy. The free press is not just another stakeholder in our public discourse; it is the check on power. And when government officials use their power to intimidate the press, to manipulate newsrooms, and silence dissent, they are not just committing an ethical breach; they are committing an assault upon the First Amendment.

So let me be absolutely clear: The FCC should never condition a merger on favorable news coverage. History teaches us that censorship rarely begins with overt tyranny. It begins with small concessions, subtle pressures, and self-censorship born of fear. But it always ends the same way: with a citizenry less informed, a democracy less vibrant, and a government less accountable.

We cannot allow that to happen in the United States of America. We must remember that freedom of the press is not a partisan issue; it is an American issue. And we must have—and always have to have—the courage to stand up, to speak out, and to say: In this country, no President will dictate the truth.

That is the promise of the First Amendment. That is the promise of our democracy. And that is the promise that we must keep.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### NOMINATION OF WARREN STEPHENS

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today, I urge my colleagues to confirm Warren Stephens to be our next U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom. President Trump could not have chosen a more qualified or well-suited person to lead the special relationship between our two nations.

Warren Stephens is a family man, a businessman, a philanthropist, and a patriot who is a pillar of his community and his family-owned financial firm, Stephens Inc.

Founded on a handshake by his father Jack and his uncle Witt, Warren become president and CEO of Stephens

when he was only 29 years old. In the four decades since, Warren has built a global presence for Stephens, including in London, where he has spent a considerable amount of time.

Warren's signature style of cordial, interpersonal, and dedicated leadership won him friends across America and the Atlantic, and, of course, in our home State of Arkansas.

For many years, Warren and his wife Harriet have also served our Arkansas community with their time, talents, and generosity. They led a major, multiyear fundraising campaign that transformed the Arkansas Arts Center into the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. Because of their tireless efforts and dynamic vision, the museum is now a place for neighbors, friends, and families to gather, learn, and enjoy amazing works of art.

Warren is also an active advocate for young generations of American students and athletes. Warren generously supports numerous universities and schools, including his alma mater, Washington and Lee, and the Episcopal Collegiate School in Little Rock.

Additionally, he is the chairman and founder of the Jackson T. Stephens Cup, which showcases collegiate golfers from NCAA Division I schools, historically Black colleges and universities, and the U.S. service academies on the Nation's preeminent golf courses.

I have had the privilege to know Warren and his family for a long time, and I can tell you that Warren has always wanted to serve his country. After decades of serving others in our Arkansas community, Warren now has answered the call to serve our country as the next U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

He is the right person to lead our strong, special relationship with the United Kingdom. I am pleased to support his nomination, and I urge all of my colleagues to confirm Warren so he can get to work on this critical job.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALLS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls with respect to the Stephens and Barrack nominations be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

#### NOMINATION OF DAVID PERDUE

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in support of our friend David Perdue's nomination to be Ambassador to China. This is certainly one of the most important nominations and appointments that will come across this floor, and the President is to be commended for picking David Perdue for this position.

China, as we all know, is the largest, the most significant, probably the longest lasting foreign policy challenge that the United States of America has, and it is going to continue to be for some time.

Today, we have seen, over the last recent decades, China move from a third-world country to a near peer to the United States. Their economy is growing rapidly, and they have done it the old fashion way: They have stolen every good idea that we have and used it to their own devices, which has brought them to the challenging position they are in for the United States. And they are a very different country than the United States is.

The world, I think, is very quickly developing into a bipolar position, where, on the one hand, you have democracies and semi-democracies like the United States, made of up of free people, of capitalism, of free markets, of entrepreneurs, and of people who very much value human rights and value the individual way, ahead of the state. On the other hand, you have countries like China that are communist. They are socialists. They are not free market or capitalist motivated. And they have no regards for human rights. The best example of that is the genocide that they commit against the Uighur Muslims in China, and the world pretty much looks the other way while they do human rights abuses that are way over the top.

So, Senator Perdue—David—you have your work cut out for you. This is going to be a challenge as we go forward, particularly over the next 4 years.

In addition to that, China has done everything it can to infiltrate the United States. Most people in America have no understanding about the tremendous amount and the millions of dollars that the Chinese Government pumps into our colleges and universities here in the United States. I myself and others have long been trying to put a stop to this. No foreign government can come into our political system and use money to influence our political system, and yet a foreign government like China can go into our colleges and universities and pump in millions of dollars and use the influence of that money to influence the colleges and universities. We don't allow this in our political system because we don't want foreign influence in our political system, nor should we allow this kind of influence in the institutions that make up the education system for future Americans.

We need to put a stop to this, and all of us, I hope, will be glad to partner with our friend David Perdue as he confronts these issues from Beijing.

In this administration and in his first term, President Trump demonstrated that he will be tough on China. He has to be.

We need a strong leader like David Perdue at the front of our fight with the Chinese Government to execute on President Trump's vision, and I hope my colleagues will join me today in supporting Mr. Perdue to be Ambassador to China.

Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that we commence the vote on the nomination.

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

#### VOTE ON PERDUE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Perdue nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 29, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 215 Ex.]

#### YEAS—67

Banks	Graham	Mullin
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Peters
Booker	Hassan	Reed
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Risch
Budd	Husted	Rosen
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Johnson	Schmitt
Collins	Justice	Scott (FL)
Coons	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cotton	Kim	Sheehy
Cramer	King	Slotkin
Crapo	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cruz	Lankford	Thune
Curtis	Lee	Tillis
Daines	Lummis	Tuberville
Duckworth	Marshall	Warner
Ernst	McCormick	Wicker
Fetterman	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	
Gallego	Moreno	

#### NAYS—29

Alsobrooks	Hirono	Schatz
Baldwin	Kelly	Schiff
Bennet	Lujan	Schumer
Blunt Rochester	Markey	Smith
Cantwell	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Heinrich	Padilla	Wyden
Hickenlooper	Sanders	

#### NOT VOTING—4

Blumenthal	Paul
McConnell	Whitehouse

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). 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 executive 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. 77, Warren Stephens, of Arkansas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

John Thune, Jim Justice, Ted Cruz, Bernie Moreno, Jon A. Husted, Steve Daines, John R. Curtis, Tommy Tuberville, Tim Sheehy, Pete Ricketts, Joni Ernst, James E. Risch, Mike Rounds, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Eric Schmitt, Katie Boyd Britt, John Barrasso.

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 Warren Stephens, of Arkansas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 59, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 216 Ex.]

#### YEAS—59

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

#### NAYS—39

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

#### NOT VOTING—2

Sanders	Whitehouse
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 59, the nays are 39.

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 Warren Stephens, of Arkansas, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

#### RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:57 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. BRITT).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

##### VOTE ON STEPHENS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Stephens nomination?

Mr. CRUZ. 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 Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 217 Ex.]

#### YEAS—59

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

#### NAYS—39

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

#### NOT VOTING—2

Sanders	Whitehouse
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The nomination was confirmed.