

records for home runs by a second baseman, for fielding percentage—96 consecutive games without an error. The man could do it all.

Throughout his tenure at the Cubs, he did a fantastic job. In fact, in 1984, who can forget the game—with all due respect to my colleagues from Missouri—in 1984, he hit a home run in the 9th inning to make sure that we had extra innings in that game against the St. Louis Cardinals and then again in the 10th to beat them. That was the kind of competitor that Ryne Sandberg was.

Throughout his career, he got a lot of hardware. He went to the All-Star game 10 times, 9 Golden Gloves, 7 Silver Slugger Awards. All of these accolades reflected the kind of person he was and are one of the reasons why Ryne Sandberg is a Hall of Famer. There was a statue of him in Wrigley Field for his contributions to the Cubs and to the game of baseball. Ryne was just synonymous with the Cubs while he was playing, and he was the kind of baseball player you were proud of. He didn't say much, but when he did, people listened.

But as great a baseball player as he was, the man was even better. Ryne Sandberg was the type of player you were proud to have on your team. He was a man of integrity. He did what he said he was going to do, worked hard, was tenacious, was great in the clubhouse. He was a player, a coach, an ambassador for us. He gave back to the community, whether it was through Cubs charities or his own Ryno kids foundation, where he helped sick kids stand up to cancer. All of those things he did to give back to the community.

He was one of those people that was just a pleasure to be around.

Somebody who understood the importance of the game but also knew the people were more important.

So, now, Ryne Sandberg is playing that eternal baseball game up in the sky, but his legacy will live on here. Countless fans will go to Cooperstown, read about his baseball exploits.

But his family—his wife Margaret, 5 kids, 11 grandkids—and all the folks in the Cubs organization know how Ryne Sandberg was a man that was more than just a baseball player. He was the kind of man that was an example for all of us in this country, who played America's pastime but knew the values of America meant taking care of our fellow citizens.

Ryne will be missed, and I hope we can all reflect upon what he meant to the game, to the Cubs, and this country as an example of how we should all be.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### NOMINATION OF CHERYL MASON

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, as we know, inspectors general in our Federal Agencies—and every Agency has one—have a really unique role in our Federal Government. They are responsible for rooting out waste and fraud, uncovering wrongdoing. They

are supposed to be fearlessly independent advocates of integrity, completely nonpartisan, and above the political fray. And that is the role they have performed in our government: saving millions—perhaps billions—of dollars in taxpayer money, ending corruption at the highest levels, and performing a vital experience for our democracy.

One of the very best of our inspectors general has been Mike Missal. He was responsible for recovering more than \$37 billion during his tenure at the Veterans' Administration. He was the inspector general at the VA under both Republican and Democratic administrations, widely respected by both sides of the aisle. Republican colleagues have worked with him, I have, and so have my colleagues on this side of the aisle. He was performing with extraordinary excellence and integrity, until he was fired without any cause, without any reason, by President Trump.

And he was not alone. In fact, the President illegally fired 18 inspectors general. I say "illegally" because they are protected by statute. They can't just be fired willy-nilly without cause. And that litigation will continue, but in the meantime, those 18 inspectors general have been deprived of the opportunity to save us money, end corruption, and protect the integrity of our democracy—18 of them, nonpartisan, independent public servants.

Today, we consider Mike Missal's replacement, a woman named Cheryl Mason, who, unfortunately, is one of the most partisan and least independent of the nominees for inspector general positions that we have seen in recent years.

We need now, more than ever, independent oversight in the VA. And so to my friends, to veterans of America who may be wondering why I am standing here urging a "no" vote on Cheryl Mason, just consider the role of inspector general in the VA for you as veterans. When you have a complaint about a VA facility—it has failed to give you appointments on time for care—if you have a complaint against some VA claims processor blowing you off, if you have a complaint about the system, about the failures to provide compensation and care, the inspector general is the one who vindicates justice for you.

Ultimately, we have an oversight function here in the U.S. Congress. I am going to fight for you as your Senator, if you are from Connecticut—or anywhere else. There are lots of different points where oversight and advocacy can occur on your behalf.

But the inspector general is inside the VA and has access to all of the documents, all of the information that are necessary to protect the integrity of this Agency. And that person should be fearlessly independent.

As a matter of fact, Cheryl Mason served on President Trump's transition team, and then she has been, for the last 6 months, senior adviser to Sec-

retary Doug Collins, who himself has been a partisan, who has dismantled the VA workforce, who has canceled contracts and endangered care and compensation from the VA.

She was senior adviser when Secretary Collins illegally fired thousands of VA employees, a quarter or a third of them veterans. He fired them, and she was his senior adviser.

As adviser, we have to presume she aided him in implementing policies that are expected to drive at least 30,000 public servants out of the VA by the end of the year, while refusing to fill 40,000 vacancies that have existed before he took that position.

Those 30,000 who will be out of the VA by the end of the year include 1,720 registered nurses, 600 doctors, 1,150 medical support assistance, 200 police officers, 80 psychologists, and more than 1,000 claims examiners. Maybe we should be grateful the number isn't 83,000, which was his plan, and she was his senior adviser for that plan.

She was a senior adviser when Secretary Collins began the process to cancel or end more than 1,600 contracts providing direct services to veterans or support for critical VA operation, including for suicide prevention and mental health treatment, cancer registry, and inspection of VA healthcare facilities. She was his senior adviser when Doug Collins wanted to end the veterans' suicide crisis line, which epitomized the cruelty and stupidity of those cuts in workforce, hiring freezes, ends in contract.

And despite a formal request from myself and Senator PETERS, the Republican chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs refused to hold a hearing on the Mason nomination. A hearing is customary for the nomination of inspectors general, particularly one this controversial.

But we did have a hearing in the VA, and it was highly illuminating—not for what we learned but for what she denied doing. Listen to her. She continually avoided giving committee members any specific information about her role in realigning the senior executives at the VA or her role in the firing or reorganization or her role in requiring employees to sign nondisclosure agreements or any of the substantive work she has been doing as a political appointee. She denied any role in the freezes, the firings, the elimination of contracts.

I said to her: Well, what have you been doing?

And we got no straight answer. She was evasive, and her evasiveness was illuminating. She refused to commit to conducting any investigation of employee terminations that were found illegal by the courts. She refused to condemn President Trump's illegal firing of her predecessor and other inspectors general.

She has a conflict of interest here. She served as a senior adviser for 6 months while policies were devised and

implemented that now she will have to review as a supposedly independent inspector general.

When you, my fellow veterans, have complaints, that is not the kind of advocate that you need. That is not the kind of investigator of corruption or waste that the country deserves, and that is not what we need from an inspector general in the VA. Veterans and taxpayers deserve an independent, nonpartisan inspector general who will conduct investigations free from interference and any collusion from the administration. Someone who is accountable and transparent, someone who comes forward candidly and forthrightly with the truth, not evading questions that are posed by Senators or the public.

We simply cannot have faith that she is going to be the kind of inspector general that our veterans deserve and the country needs at this moment. We can't have faith that she will be unbiased in her judgment relating to President Trump or Secretary Collins.

She is supposed to be judging them, but she is beholden to them, and she has been part and parcel of the policies and actions of this administration that have been so dangerous and damaging to the VA in these past months.

Our veterans deserve better than a political loyalist who is going to be rubberstamping those policies. Her confirmation, in fact, will diminish the credibility of the office of inspector general at the VA and in other Agencies as well.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this nomination. We can do better. The country needs and deserves better. And maybe, most important, our veterans need and deserve better.

I yield the floor.

(Mrs. BLACKBURN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). The Senator from Missouri.

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

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

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previously scheduled vote occur immediately.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Gadyaces Serralta, of Florida, to be Director of the United States Marshals Service.

#### VOTE ON SERRALTA NOMINATION

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

Mr. DAINES. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) are necessarily absent.

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

[Rollcall Vote No. 460 Ex.]

#### YEAS—59

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

#### NAYS—39

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

#### NOT VOTING—2

Gallego Kelly

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

#### VOTE ON MASON NOMINATION

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

Mrs. BRITT. 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 Arizona (Mr. KELLY) are necessarily absent.

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

[Rollcall Vote No. 461 Ex.]

#### YEAS—53

Banks	Cornyn	Graham
Barrasso	Cotton	Grassley
Blackburn	Cramer	Hagerty
Boozman	Crapo	Hawley
Britt	Cruz	Hoeven
Budd	Curtis	Husted
Capito	Daines	Hyde-Smith
Cassidy	Ernst	Johnson
Collins	Fischer	Justice

Kennedy	Moreno	Scott (SC)
Lankford	Mullin	Sheehy
Lee	Murkowski	Sullivan
Lummis	Paul	Thune
Marshall	Ricketts	Tillis
McConnell	Risch	Tuberville
McCormick	Rounds	Wicker
Moody	Schmitt	Young
Moran	Scott (FL)	

#### NAYS—45

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

#### NOT VOTING—2

Gallego Kelly

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). 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. 254, Andrea Lucas, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2030. (Reappointment)

John Thune, Tommy Tuberville, Bernie Moreno, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mike Rounds, Katie Boyd Britt, Roger Marshall, Pete Ricketts, John Boozman, David McCormick, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Rick Scott of Florida, Eric Schmitt, Lindsey Graham.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Andrea Lucas, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2030 (Reappointment), 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 Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEG0), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 44, as follows: