

and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 487 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—4

Gallego	Welch	Wicker
McConnell		

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 51; the nays are 45. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Brian Burch, of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO MARK CROWLEY

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I want to highlight one of my members, a former member of my staff, Mark Crowley.

For the past 8 years, I have benefited from the service, the hard work, and the loyalty of my legislative director, Mark Crowley. After 12 years of working here on Capitol Hill, Mark is leaving public service, but he has made a positive—a very positive—change during the time that he has spent here working in the U.S. Senate.

Before coming to work for me, he was working for his home State senator, Mark Kirk of Illinois. He was with Senator Kirk from 2013 to 2017. He first joined my office as a legislative assistant covering issues that surrounded the topic of justice, the Department of Justice. He also became my counsel, helping me on issues ranging from technology, taxes, to consumer protection.

Mark's contribution to the Senate has been both wide-ranging and deeply meaningful. One of the examples of this impact of his work was in 2018. The subcommittee in the Commerce Committee that I chaired completed a Senate investigation into the sexual abuse of Olympic athletes. He helped lead a thorough investigation that uncovered systemic failures that allowed abuse to persist way too long.

The joint investigation included four subcommittee hearings, interviews with Olympic athletes and survivors, and the retrieval of more than 70,000 pages of documents.

This work culminated in the development and passage of the Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act of 2019. This landmark law made critical improvements to the Olympic movement that strengthened oversight and accountability for the safety of American athletes, and Mark was a critical component of the team that saw this legislation become law.

After serving as an LA and then as counsel, Mark shifted his work to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which, as general counsel, he was greatly helpful to me after I became that committee's chair.

In that role, he talked to whistleblowers, provided in-depth oversight of the operations and policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and helped veterans navigate legal challenges within the VA.

Mark has played a key role in passing some of the most consequential veterans legislation in recent memory, including the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act and the PACT Act.

Through his work on behalf of veterans, Mark has showed the same qualities that defined his work on the Olympic investigation: deep policy expertise, a strong desire to get things done—and done right—and great care for the people who are involved.

At the beginning of 2023, Mark then took over the policy team, serving as my legislative director back in my personal office. Most recently, Mark helped to guide the ACRE Act and the Financing Our Energy Future Act to passage during the reconciliation process.

Whether we are talking about veterans, technology, the Olympics, complex Senate procedure, Mark could be counted on to effectively advise me and lead our team to the success that we have had.

He has been a mentor and guiding hand to several legislative assistants

who have come through my office. My junior staff would tell you that Mark brings a steady hand, a steady presence, and even under pressure, he recognizes the importance of thoughtful decision making before taking action. They would also tell you that Mark is quick to crack a joke and often brings much needed humor to Capitol Hill on stressful days. More importantly, he has a real interest in getting to know the people he works with—not just knowing them, not just knowing what makes them tick, but being a mentor and a friend.

Mark leads in a way that earns respect. He makes sure that everyone on the team knows their role, and they know that it matters. He is the kind of person who listens first, gives clear feedback, and never dismisses an idea out of hand. I have many ideas that I thought would be shot down from the very beginning, and Mark, at least, took time to convince me that I was wrong. Because of that, my staff and I have been more encouraged to take ownership and to work harder.

While Mark has expressed to me and to his colleagues how much he loves working in the Senate as a legislative director, there is another role that he loves even more, and that of being a husband and a dad.

The fact that the Senate never seems to end its business anytime during the normal business hours really has created problems in people's family lives. I am grateful to Mark's wife Colleen for letting me keep Mark at work late into these nights for evening votes and vote-aramas, even when that meant he missed out on helping with bedtime and other tasks related to being a dad.

Mark is the father to Ilsa, James, Hallee, and has a fourth baby on the way. As much as he loves working in the Senate, he loves his family. And with a fourth child on the way, he recognized it is time to really put his family first.

I will miss Mark's presence in my office and in the Senate. I will miss his skills and expertise. They don't come along every day. He has a lot to offer our country. While he wasn't a Kansan—perhaps his only shortcoming—he embodies many of the traits that we value in the Midwest: hard work, a cheerful attitude, and determination to get things done.

My many thanks to Mark. I thank Mark for his years of service to me, to Kansans, and to our country. I am wishing him well as a father and a husband and in his new line of work.

I ask the Senate to acknowledge with me, today in these remarks, the contribution that we all find from those who work side by side with us every day in hopes for a great outcome.

TRIBUTE TO GENE MERRY

Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a Kansan, a Kansan named Gene Merry—a longtime resident of Burlington, KS—as he prepares to begin a new chapter in his life in another Kansas community, Salina.

Gene made countless investments in his local community, including decades of public service, with 12 years as the mayor of the community in the city of Burlington and another 12 years as a county commissioner for the County of Coffey.

To many, he is known as the “Downtown Guy,” a nickname he earned over decades of restoring and revitalizing downtown Burlington. Throughout more than 40 years in the community, Gene Merry restored 26 homes, cleaned up more than 100 lots, and restored 28 downtown buildings. Those of us who come from small towns and rural areas know the importance of somebody who is going to take the lead in trying to make our community look better and to be better and to create opportunities for those buildings—those homes for people to live in and those businesses for people to commence a business and to succeed.

Gene and his wife of more than 40 years, Barbara, raised two children—Emilee and Bobby—in Burlington. Sadly, in 2023, Gene lost his wife Barbara to cancer. He remarried to Linda Hunsicker, on December 14, 2024, and they are now relocating to Salina to be near her family.

Although Gene is leaving Burlington, the community will not forget him. His legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of those whom he touched and in the streets and byways of the town in which he invested. If I had to guess, Gene will be a constant visitor back to Burlington.

When asked what he will miss most about Burlington, Gene responded, “This is a very friendly community. I’ll miss walking downtown and talking to people.”

Gene loved Burlington, but he also loved Kansas. And between 1997 and 2010, he fulfilled a personal goal of driving all of Kansas’s more than 10,000 miles of highway, both paved and dirt and gravel. He has driven a lot of roads across Kansas, and I hope he hasn’t exceeded me in the amount of time and effort and places he has been across our State. But he loved Kansas, and he demonstrated he wanted to see the geography; he wanted to see the view; and he wanted to say hello and shake hands with the people.

As part of something called the Kansas Sampler Foundation project, Gene has visited all eight wonders of our State, from the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson to the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, to Monument Rock in Gove County. He knows firsthand our rich history and natural beauty, and he also knows the hearts of the people who live there.

No one could say it better than he did when he said, “Kansas has the greatest people—and Burlington is a great place to call home.”

So thank you, Gene, for investing in a cause bigger than yourself and for leaving behind a legacy of service and devotion to the community you love and to the State that you live in and

admire. You have been a role model. In the articles I have read about people praising you, what they said is you caused them to decide they wanted to do something. And isn’t that one of the greatest compliments and one of the most necessary components of the way we live our lives? When you can convince somebody else that they, too, ought to volunteer and make a difference, you are really special.

So, Mr. President, I use this opportunity to thank Gene Merry for his tremendous contribution to the city of Burlington and to the people of the State of Kansas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, it is 2:20 on Saturday afternoon, not a usual time for the Senate to be in business, especially leading into the August State work period when Senators are home meeting with their constituents, hearing their concerns, sharing news about what was worked on. So you can say it is unusual, for sure, that we are here.

I want to take a brief trip down memory lane to explain why we are here for the benefit of Senators, especially Senators who haven’t been here until recently, and for the benefit of our friends who are visiting in the Gallery.

We are here for one reason. We are here because of the actions of one man: CHUCK SCHUMER, the Democratic leader. We are here voting, as you have probably seen and wondered about, on a series of nominees. These are not household names. For some of you, you may not even have known the job existed. No offense. I am sure it is important to them and their parents.

But for over 200 years, these kind of nominees didn’t get a vote on a procedural question and then 2 hours of debate and then another vote on confirmation; they were voice-voted or they were adopted by what is called unanimous consent of the Senate—for over 200 years.

You can see the evidence here in front of me on this chart. This is the percentage of civilian nominees who have been confirmed by voice vote or by unanimous consent going back to George Bush 41 and to the day of President Trump’s second term, through about the first 6 months of the administration.

George Bush 41: 98 percent. Bill Clinton. Some people thought Bill Clinton’s Presidency started at a more polarized time of politics. Nope. Ninety-eight percent for Bill Clinton as well. George W. Bush, Bush 43: Well, it is a 5X increase in the number of record votes we needed but still 90 percent.

I would note that Senator SCHUMER was elected in 1998. So he showed up here about 2 years before George W. Bush did.

Obama—despite the treatment of George W. Bush by the Democratic

Senators—stayed steady, 90 percent. Ninety percent of all of Barack Obama’s nominees through his first 6 months were confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent.

Look at this huge drop here—from 90 percent with Barack Obama to not even two-thirds for Donald Trump in his first term.

And yes, it does decline by another 8 percent to Joe Biden. As is often said, what goes around comes around. The shoe will be on the other foot, and you might not like how it feels.

But look now at the unprecedented break from the customs of the Senate under these Senate Democrats and CHUCK SCHUMER: from 57 percent to zero—zero—not a single one. Not a single nominee of Donald Trump’s has been confirmed by voice vote or by unanimous consent in the first 6-plus months of his administration—a totally unprecedented blockade.

And we are not talking about the Secretary of Defense or the Secretary of the Treasury. Again, we are talking about jobs like the Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the SBA. I would bet most of you didn’t even know that job existed. They do important work, but does the Senate really need to spend 2 hours and two votes on it? I would suggest not, based on historical customs.

So when did this all start? Did it happen when TV cameras got in the Senate and Senators could come down here and perform for the TV camera? No. In fact, there are ample examples and precedent of highly controversial nominations not even requiring a 60-vote threshold.

Think about Clarence Thomas, maybe the best example—Clarence Thomas in 1991: The most consequential nomination we consider, a lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court of the United States. One of the most, if not the most, controversial nominees in history because of the lies and calumnies that Democratic Senators made against him, I would add—he was confirmed on a record vote of 52 to 48.

Now, you may say: Well, how did he get confirmed? He didn’t have 60 votes. And that is because, as late as 1991, it was considered unprecedented for a Senator to require what we call a cloture motion—a motion to end debate at a 60-vote threshold on a nominee—on any nominee, to include a Supreme Court Justice.

Think about some of the Senators who were here in 1991 who could have, on their own accord, irrespective of the wishes of another 99 Senators, demanded that Clarence Thomas get 60 votes before he be confirmed: Teddy Kennedy, Robert Byrd, Joe Biden, John Kerry—lions of the Democratic Senate. Not a single one of them came down here and said: I want to demand a 60-vote threshold for Clarence Thomas.

Maybe there were conversations about it, but maybe people like Teddy Kennedy and Robert Byrd said: We don’t do that. That is not the way things are done here—until 1999 when