

Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant bill 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. 610, David Clay Fowlkes, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, Mike Crapo, Tim Sheehy, John Cornyn, Roger Marshall, John Barrasso, Rick Scott of Florida, Markwayne Mullin, Ted Budd, Cynthia M. Lummis, Jim Justice, Katie Boyd Britt, Bernie Moreno, Tommy Tuberville, Eric Schmitt, Jon A. Husted.

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 David Clay Fowlkes, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) would have voted "Yea", the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted "Yea", and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "Yea".

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 49, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 21 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Banks	Grassley	Moreno
Barrasso	Hassan	Mullin
Boozman	Hawley	Murkowski
Britt	Hoeben	Ricketts
Budd	Husted	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Justice	Shaheen
Cornyn	Kaine	Sheehy
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tuberville
Curtis	Lummis	Whitehouse
Daines	Marshall	Wicker
Durbin	McCormick	Young
Ernst	Moody	
Fischer	Moran	

NAYS—40

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

NOT VOTING—11

Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Cramer	Luján	Scott (SC)
Fetterman	McConnell	Tillis
Graham	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). On this vote, the yeas are 49, the nays are 40. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant bill clerk read the nomination of David Clay Fowlkes, of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas.

The Senator from Louisiana.

CHAGOS ISLANDS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk for a few minutes about national security and top-of-the-list, king-of-the-hill, a No. 1 stupidity.

These are the Chagos Islands. The Chagos Islands—there are 60 of them. They are here in the Indian Ocean. One of those islands is an island called Diego Garcia, on which the United States and our friends in Great Britain have one of the most—if not the most—important military bases in the world. It is jointly administered by both the U.S. and the UK—though, truth be told, most of the firepower is provided by the United States of America.

We use Diego Garcia to conduct training missions. We use it to reload submarines. In fact, it is one of the few military bases where we can actually reload submarines. We use Diego Garcia to respond to tensions throughout the Middle East, throughout Africa, and throughout Asia. Recently, we relocated several B-2 bombers to respond to Iran's aggression toward demonstrators.

There aren't words in English to overstate the importance of the Diego Garcia military installation.

Now, the United Kingdom owns the Chagos Islands. In 1814, the Chagos Islands were owned by France, and they were ceded to the UK.

The UK also owned another island down here called Mauritius.

For many, many years, the United Kingdom, which then owned and still owns the Chagos Islands and in 1814, was ceded Mauritius—for many years, the United Kingdom administered the Chagos Islands from Mauritius. Mauritius never owned the Chagos Islands.

Mauritius and the Chagos Islands were owned—both—by the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom administered both islands or groups of islands from Mauritius.

Let me say it again. Mauritius never owned the Chagos Islands.

In 1968, the United Kingdom decided to give Mauritius its independence, but the United Kingdom kept the Chagos Islands. Subsequently, as I mentioned, the United States and the UK built one of the most important military bases in all of human history on Diego Garcia.

Why am I telling you this? Well, a few years ago, Mauritius filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice.

The International Court of Justice, as you know, Mr. President, is part of the United Nations, and I don't mean any disrespect, but nobody pays any attention to them. They don't have any authority. They certainly don't have any authority over the United States of America, and they don't have any authority over the United Kingdom either.

But Mauritius files this lawsuit with the International Court of Justice, and it says: The United Kingdom is a bunch of mean, old colonialists.

Now, remember, this is the United Kingdom that gave Mauritius its independence in 1965. Nonetheless, as soon as Mauritius got its independence, they filed a suit in the International Court of Justice and said: The UK is a bunch of mean, old, White, racist colonialists, and we want them to give us the Chagos Islands.

Huh? They actually said: Give us back the Chagos Islands.

Mauritius never owned the Chagos Islands.

But anyway, predictably, the International Court of Justice ruled in favor of Mauritius. I don't think anybody was particularly surprised, nor did anybody pay particular attention until, in recent years, United Kingdom Prime Minister Starmer—the current Prime Minister of the UK is leading the charge—came up with this idea. Why? I don't understand. I guess the Prime Minister feels guilty somehow.

He said: OK, we are going to give the Chagos Islands that we own back to Mauritius—even though Mauritius never owned them—we are going to give the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, but if the United States agrees, we are going to keep the military base here in the Chagos Islands, on Diego Garcia, and—get this; this is really special. Even though the UK owns the Chagos Islands, they said: We will give it to Mauritius, and we will pay Mauritius squillions of dollars to lease from Mauritius the military base for 99 years.

Now, I have thought about why they would do this. Real strong drugs are the only possible explanation for the Prime Minister of the UK to do this—to give away something that the United Kingdom owns to a country that never owned it and pay the country to lease what the United States and

the United Kingdom have already invested billions of dollars in. It has got to be drugs—real strong drugs. But anyway, that is what they did.

Now, as best I can tell, other than Prime Minister Starmer—I don't mean any disrespect; I just think he is wrong. The only person on this planet who thinks this is a good idea besides Prime Minister Starmer is Xi Jinping of China. He has been for years anticipating that this might happen, cozying up to Mauritius, and they have become best buddies.

In fact, China has convinced Mauritius to sign on to two Chinese-instigated—actually, Communist Party of China-instigated—two treaties. One is called the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. This is a China-backed treaty. They convinced Mauritius to join it. It prohibits the research, stockpiling, and possession of nuclear weapons across the African continent.

OK, you say, what is the harm in that? Well, I am going to tell you in a second.

China also convinced Mauritius to become a partner in what is called the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation trade and security agreement. That is between China and 53 African nations. What does that do? That also maintains a commitment to building nuclear weapon-free zones.

Now, why did China do this, and why should we care? Because once Mauritius owns the Chagos Islands—even though they say they are going to sign a lease and allow the UK and America to continue to operate the military base, once Mauritius owns the islands, I can guarantee you that China is going to put the pressure on Mauritius to allow China to force inspections of military equipment on all of the Chagos Islands, including Diego Garcia.

Isn't that special? President Xi Jinping can't wait. He loves this idea of giving all this away to assuage Prime Minister Starmer's guilt. He loves this idea as much as the devil hates holy water.

Now, President Trump early in his second term—I have given several speeches about this—agreed to it. And I said at the time it was a mistake. A lot of people said it was a mistake.

He got some bad advice, and I know who gave him that advice. And they are no longer there. But be that as it may, I called the President and talked to him about it. And he said: No, I am going to listen to my adviser, and he agreed to it.

The President has recently changed his mind. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Many in the United Kingdom are starting to question the decision of Prime Minister Starmer.

The House of Lords, one of the legislative chambers in Great Britain, has started asking a lot of questions. The people of Great Britain have started asking a lot of tough questions.

Prime Minister Starmer—there will be an election soon. There may be a

snap election in the UK at some point, but Prime Minister Starmer is polling right now—he is in a lot of trouble politically. He is polling right now right up there. I think he is just a little bit below toenail fungus among the people of the United Kingdom. He is in deep trouble politically.

Every prognosticator who studies UK politics says that the next Prime Minister and the next party in leadership will be the Reform Party.

And if the Reform Party takes over in the UK, the Reform Party has already announced publicly that the first thing they will do is stop paying money on the lease that Prime Minister Starmer has signed with Mauritius. What happens if the Reform Party does that? I tell you what happens: The lease becomes null and void.

Anybody who knows a law book from a J. Crew catalog knows that if you sign a contract, that is all a lease is. And if you stop making payments, the contract becomes void. And so Mauritius will have the right—they will probably go back to the International Court of Justice, since some people in the leadership of the United Kingdom love it so much, and get a judgment to declare the lease invalid. And then what?

And then Mauritius, which China is courting, is going to become the owner of a joint American-United Kingdom military base on Diego Garcia, one of the most important in the world.

I have got rocks in my driveway that are smarter than this. And many people in the United Kingdom—God bless them. I love the UK. They are our oldest friends in the world. I spent some time there. Went to school there. I love the people of Great Britain. But many of them are waking up.

And they are starting to say to the Prime Minister: This is just a terrible—terrible—idea. And they are saying to the Prime Minister, no disrespect: But, look, we understand that your testicles are on back order from Amazon, but in the meantime, you just can't do this just because you feel guilty—just because you feel guilty because the United Kingdom at one time owned other countries.

Now, look, I don't know what is going to happen. President Trump—thank you, President Trump, for objecting to this. But I don't know what is going to happen if Prime Minister Starmer, who is polling right up there with fungal infections, decides to go forward and President Trump says no. I don't know what will happen.

If Prime Minister Starmer, because he feels guilty because the good people of Great Britain at one time owned other countries to which they have given their independence—if Prime Minister Starmer is determined to do this, here is what I hope he will do: Rather than giving up the islands to Mauritius, which eventually will end up giving our base to China, allow the United States of America to buy the Chagos Islands. Let's just buy them.

The United Kingdom will get money. The military base will become ours. China will not own the military base. And Mauritius, which has never owned any portion, not one square inch of the Chagos Islands, will not own them either. And the world will be safe.

I am going to end on this note. This is something that the Presiding Officer knows very, very well because I have talked to you about it.

This military installation is very serious. It is very important. Why? Well, President Xi in China and President Putin in Russia and the Ayatollah in Iran have formed a partnership, and the managing partner is Xi Jinping.

And their goal is to have Russia dominate Central and Eastern Europe, to have the Ayatollah in Iran dominate the Middle East, and to have China dominate the Indo-Pacific and be free to roam in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America.

And while they are doing this, Russia and China want to control both the Arctic and space. We all know that is what is going on. The Presiding Officer has seen the same classified information that I have. That is not a world that is safe for America. That is not a world that is safe for America.

I don't want America to be the world's policeman, but I will be damned if I want Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin or the Ayatollah in Iran to be the world's policemen either.

This military base is key. So I am asking you, Prime Minister Starmer—I shouldn't have said what I said. Your testicles aren't on back order from Amazon. I take it back. Please do the right thing here.

If you are determined to give away these islands to Mauritius, which never owned them, which inevitably is going to help China, if you are determined to divest the people of the United Kingdom of these islands, please sell them to the United States. I will sponsor the legislation happily, enthusiastically to appropriate the money to do it. And then the United Kingdom can be out of the picture, and the United States can continue to control one of the mightiest and most important military bases in all of human history.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

NOMINATION OF SEAN PLANKEY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I will object to the Senate proceeding to the nomination of Sean Plankey of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, CISA Department of Homeland Security.

Since July 2022, I have been fighting to get CISA to release an important,