

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. 614, Aaron Christian Peterson, of Alaska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Alaska.

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 Husted.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Aaron Christian Peterson, of Alaska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Alaska, 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. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. McCONNELL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 25 Ex.]

YEAS—55

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

NAYS—39

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

NOT VOTING—6

Blumenthal	Klobuchar	Luján
Kim	Lee	McConnell

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 39. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Aaron Christian Peterson, of Alaska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Alaska.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HONORING CHRISTOPHER OHLMEYER

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise on a very sad occasion, recognizing Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office Deputy Christopher Ohlmeyer, a motorcycle officer who was just killed in a traffic motor vehicle accident. His death will be felt by his family, his fellow officers, and our entire State.

Christopher Ohlmeyer was a great officer, but he was more than the uniform he wore. He was a husband, a father, and a friend.

The way that he died, though tragic, is a testament to the way he lived. Deputy Ohlmeyer was struck as he was serving as a motorcycle escort for a funeral procession and was hit by a car from behind. In his final moments, he was serving someone else.

I am told that those who did not have a family were invited to be part of his; that he brought people together; that he was deeply committed to serving his community.

May we pray for his family, remember his sacrifice, and strive to live our legacy and our lives in whatever way we can, as he did his.

With gratitude for Deputy Ohlmeyer's service and remembrance of his life, Mr. President, I ask that we pause for a moment to remember Deputy Ohlmeyer.

(Moment of silence.)

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ELECTIONS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I know the midterm elections aren't until November 2026, but there have been some surprising results recently in some of the special elections that have been held around the country, most recently in a State senate seat in Texas, over the weekend.

Taylor Rehmet, a Democrat, won handily in a district won by President Trump by 17 points, in 2024. Some people are calling this a warning sign to Republicans, suggesting that support for the GOP is waning in Texas.

Even the New York Times—maybe I should say, especially the New York Times—is trying to sound the death knell for the GOP, describing the race as an “upset” that has “rattled Republicans.”

Of course, our Democratic friends and the mainstream media will take any opportunity they can to paint President Trump and Republicans in a bad light, in an effort to raise expectations for their own electoral success at the ballot box. But there is something more going on here that does not just affect Republicans but, literally, all Americans, and we should all find this development alarming.

What is so alarming, may you ask? Well, it is people sitting on the couch and not voting, not participating in the process of self-government.

This particular special election in Texas that surprised so many was decided by 15 percent of registered voters. That is less than 95,000 people in a district of over 600,000 eligible voters.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated event. It has happened, time and time again, around the country.

Over in Houston, another special election was held to fill the House seat of the late Sylvester Turner, in the 18th District, and it demonstrated a similar anemic turnout. CHRISTIAN MENEFFEE won this seat with only 5.6 percent of registered voters—5.6 percent. Of course, when such a small group of people have such a disproportionate voice in the outcome of an election, they essentially are choosing their candidate, who may or may not be the candidate that would be supported by a broad coalition of registered voters if they had simply decided to participate.

In this case, the winning Democratic candidate in District 18 is—this was a solid blue district. But even though the results may not be shocking, the small proportion of voters who actually participated in the election should be.

This is not just a warning sign to Republicans. This is a warning sign to us all. When too many people sit on the sidelines, the consequences are election results that are not actually representative of the people who are being governed by these officials.

Well, some folks may say: Well, it is just a small election, and it doesn't really matter. Or I only vote when it really matters, and that is for President of the United States.

But the truth is every Federal, State, and local election matters. It matters because it affects every aspect of our daily lives: your work, how much you get to take home in your paycheck, what your kids are taught in school, and on and on and on.

We are blessed to live in what is called a democratic republic. It is not a pure democracy, and it is not a pure republic. But our government derives its powers from the consent of the government. The primary mechanism by which self-government actually works is through elections, and it is shocking to see so few people participating in our elections.

If Americans don't turn out to vote, including in special and midterm elections, then we are essentially forfeiting or giving up our right to a voice in self-government.

Make no mistake, our Democrat colleagues have a well-organized ground game, and they will stop at nothing to undermine the gains we have seen just in a single year, since President Trump came into office. That is the way our system works.

To top it off, Democrats have built a nationwide lobby to support their efforts, otherwise known as the mainstream media. But this brings me to another problem that undermines our system of self-government, which is that it is too easy for people who can't legally vote to cast a ballot—in other words, voter fraud.

When a ballot is cast by someone that is not qualified to vote in an election, it undermines the integrity of the ballot for the people who are qualified to vote—for example, an illegal alien. Illegal aliens, noncitizens are technically barred from registering to vote, but in some States, people are not even required to show proof of citizenship at the time of registration.

Every time we talk about voter ID, the left says we are trying to disenfranchise minorities and the underrepresented, but that is not consistent with the facts. In Texas, where voter ID is required, you don't have to have a driver's license. You can get a government-issued identification at no cost.

Democrats know that if you actually require people to show that they are qualified to vote, their voter base will shrink, especially in sanctuary States that have been havens for illegal aliens for years.

Not a single person in this country, I think, truly believes that you cannot get a valid identification if you are a U.S. citizen.

Again, this used to be a bipartisan consensus.

You need identification to buy a car, to buy a phone, to get on an airplane, to open a bank account, to cash a check. So I find it hard to believe that any rational person would object to requiring a person to show that they are a citizen to vote in elections that are meant to represent all of us at all levels of government.

With the dramatic rise in mail-in voting that happened during COVID-19, many Americans had concerns about this particular method of voting and that it might be abused. But if the truth be told, it was, but you don't hear much about the convictions across the country against those who committed voter fraud.

After all, if the ballot is mailed to the wrong address, there is not much stopping the wrong person from filling it out, pretending to be someone they are not, forging a signature, and dropping it in the mail. It is pretty easy. It is too easy.

Nor is there anything to stop ballot harvesting, which is actually legal in some States, and collection by "well-meaning" organizations and individuals who are just trying to "help out their fellow citizens."

Well, this is a very disturbing pattern. I believe the American people deserve better than to have their concerns about election security swept under the rug.

I want to commend my friends, the leadership in the State of Texas—the legislature, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the speaker—for taking this issue seriously and working hard to make sure that mail-in voting is secure.

But, unlike Texas, many blue States are, unfortunately, not doing their part to make sure only legally qualified voters can cast a ballot. So I am thankful to our colleague Senator MIKE LEE of Utah for introducing the SAVE America Act, which will require proof of citizenship at the time of registration, as well as photo identification at the time of voting.

It doesn't seem like a big burden for voters to be able to show that they are qualified to vote and that they are who they say they are through voter ID.

I am a proud cosponsor of the SAVE America Act, which I believe is long overdue, to strengthen the integrity of our election systems. If you think about it, all of us have a stake in this battle, whether we live in a red State or a blue State—particularly in Federal elections—because for every unqualified voter who casts a ballot, it undermines or dilutes the vote of those of us who are legally qualified to vote. So I hope the U.S. Senate will take up and pass this legislation, and I and others have been discussing it with the majority leader.

But something much simpler that each and every one of us can do that will strengthen our system of representative government is to get to the polls and vote.

Now, in Texas, the primary is on March 3, coming up here very soon. We start early voting on February 17. So there is a lot of time, a lot of opportunity for people to cast their ballot and to participate in their primary, whether it is on the Democratic side or the Republican side.

I know voting is voluntary, but if you think about what is good for our country and what is good for representative democracy, you would agree with me that voter participation is far below what it should be.

If you walk out the doors of this Chamber and down the hall into the Capitol Rotunda, you will see a famous painting by John Trumbull, the Declaration of Independence. This painting depicts our Founding Fathers gathered around to sign the monumental document that would set the United States apart on a new course in history.

Thomas Jefferson, of course, wrote in the Declaration of Independence that governments derive "their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed." Those who signed risked their very lives because, by doing so, they were committing an act of treason against Great Britain, at the time.

This year, of course, we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the

Declaration of Independence. So it is worth reflecting, once again, not only on the principles of self-government that our country was founded on but also the sacrifices made by our Founders and others to protect those rights.

If these men and women, over time, in the armed services and elsewhere, were willing to risk their lives in order to secure representation, surely each and every one of us ought to do our part to participate in self-government by exercising our right to vote that so many have fought and died for.

I urge each and every one of my constituents in Texas, but I would like to speak to all 330 million Americans: Please participate in your elections. Ours happens to be one of the earliest this midterm election season on March 3.

We all need to appreciate the privilege of self-government. So just don't sit at home and complain or yell at the TV set about what is happening. Make a difference. Let your voice be heard. Participate in this incredible experiment now we have had for 250 years in self-government that has served us so well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. KAINÉ. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the issue that will dominate attention in the Senate between now and next Friday, Friday the 13th, a discussion about reforms to the Department of Homeland Security and the activities it has engaged in all around the country.

It is common, during the 13 years that I have been in the Senate, for folks to talk about immigrants as a problem. It is very uncommon for people to take this floor and talk about immigrants as a strength. And based on my experience in 31 years now, coming on 32, in elected office in Virginia, I believe immigrants are a strength and not a problem. That doesn't mean there aren't issues that we need to resolve, but I think it is high time that people in this Chamber talked about immigrants to this country and recognized the strengths that they bring.

President Trump and his administration have launched upon an unprecedented campaign against immigrants—immigrant crackdowns in Virginia and elsewhere. And the claim of the administration and many who support it is that this is because of a desire to protect Americans and rid American streets of criminals.

I maintain that President Trump has, instead, demeaned and dehumanized immigrants and their countries of origin since day one of his political career for matters completely unrelated to public safety. And since he has been in power to be President, both in his first term and now this term, he has thrown everything he can at keeping people out and even rounding people up who he views as the wrong kind of people, the "other." His efforts to round