

choice we make generation after generation to see each other not as enemies but as friends, as partners in the boldest experiment in democracy the world has ever known. It is the work of building longer bridges instead of higher walls between parties, between communities, between the America we are and the America we could be. It is the recognition that our Nation's diversity isn't our weakness; it is the very source of our strength, our creativity, our resilience.

"A more perfect Union" means families who don't go bankrupt because someone got sick. It means kids who can breathe clean air and inherit a livable planet. It means immigrants being welcomed for their contributions, not vilified for their origins. It means learning from our history and charting a more equitable course for the future. It means justice that applies equally to the powerful and the powerless. It means scientists free to pursue truth without fear. It means alliances that multiply our influence instead of isolation that diminishes it. It means an America where disagreement doesn't mean demonization, where debate doesn't mean destruction, where we can be fierce advocates for our beliefs while still recognizing the humanity in those who disagree.

None of that is easy, and if the last 10 years of American life are any evidence, none of that is guaranteed. The Constitution gives us the tools, but we have to do the job. The Founders lit the flame, but we have to keep it burning. They started the work, and we must continue it.

Tonight, the President will try to convince you that everything is fine. I am asking you to trust your own eyes, to trust your own experience, to trust the evidence, and then I am asking you to trust something else: your own power—the power to organize, to vote, to speak truth, to run for office, to hold leaders accountable; the power to look at what we have lost and decide we are going to fight with everything we have to get it back.

Because a more perfect Union doesn't depend on any one person or President, as much as he may want it to. It depends on teachers who refuse to teach lies. It depends on students who refuse to abandon their dreams. It depends on journalists who refuse to stop asking questions, on scientists who refuse to abandon facts, on neighbors who refuse to turn against each other, on Americans who refuse to accept that this is as good as it gets. It depends on you, on me—every single one of us.

The work is hard. The progress is slow. The discouragement is real. But so is the possibility. So is the promise. So is the extraordinary, improbable, beautiful experiment that is America if we have the courage to believe in it again and the determination to make it real. The pursuit of a more perfect Union has to continue. It must, and it continues with us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147.

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

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 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 311, H.R. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Bill Hagerty, Tim Sheehy, Thom Tillis, Tom Cotton, Joni Ernst, Jim Banks, Markwayne Mullin, Tommy Tuberville, Steve Daines, Josh Hawley, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Jon Husted, Pete Ricketts, Susan M. Collins.

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 motion to proceed to H.R. 7147, a bill making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes, 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 Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 39 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Banks	Cramer	Hoeven
Barrasso	Crapo	Husted
Blackburn	Cruz	Hyde-Smith
Boozman	Curtis	Johnson
Britt	Daines	Justice
Budd	Ernst	Kennedy
Capito	Fetterman	Lankford
Cassidy	Graham	Lee
Collins	Grassley	Lummis
Cornyn	Hagerty	Marshall
Cotton	Hawley	McConnell

McCormick	Ricketts	Sheehy
Moody	Risch	Sullivan
Moran	Rounds	Tuberville
Moreno	Schmitt	Wicker
Mullin	Scott (FL)	Young
Murkowski	Scott (SC)	

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—5

Fischer	Paul	Whitehouse
Hassan	Tillis	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 45.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 651.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Ryan McCormack, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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. 651, Ryan McCormack, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy.

John Thune, Katie Boyd Britt, Jim Banks, John Barrasso, John R. Curtis, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Kevin Cramer, Joni Ernst, Pete Ricketts, Bernie Moreno, Rick Scott of Florida, Markwayne Mullin, Mike Crapo, Ted Budd, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Chuck Grassley.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO RALPH M. OAKLEY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in 1993, Quincy, IL, experienced the worst flooding in the Gem City's history. Over a span of a few short weeks, thousands of acres of farmland were covered with multiple feet of water. Businesses and livelihoods became submerged, and Illinoisans were in desperate need of disaster relief. And before the era of smartphones and social media, there was a time when broadcast stations were many people's only source for local news. For Quincy, that station was WGEM-TV.

Owned by the Oakley family, who at the time had more than five generations in the news industry, WGEM provided nonstop coverage of the floods across west central Illinois. WGEM told families where to go for shelter, informed concerned citizens of how they could help, and dispelled rumors that undermined disaster response. For more than 600 straight hours, WGEM was in the eye of the storm, giving Illinoisans the information they needed to stay safe. Ralph Oakley, station vice president and general manager, worked to ensure the station spared no expense to cover the flood. WGEM, without concern for ad sales or commercial revenues, showed up for its community in its time of need. On March 3, the National Association of Broadcasters will be awarding Ralph with the Chuck Sherman Television Leadership Award in recognition of his contributions to his community and local broadcasting. I can think of no better recipient for such an honor than Ralph Oakley.

While working in the broadcast industry is the dream of so many, for Ralph it was destiny. Since 1891, four generations of Oakleys before him had managed the various Quincy newspapers and television stations. Thomas, Ralph's father, was president and CEO of Quincy Newspapers, Inc., and worked diligently to bring the company's papers and channels to more homes across Illinois. In 1977, when he was just 21 years old and still pursuing a degree at Quincy University, then known as Quincy College, Ralph joined the family business. He learned the ropes at Quincy's own WGEM AM-FM-TV before traveling to Indiana and West Virginia to work at QNI's various stations.

But Ralph would not stay away for long. By 1993, he moved back to Quincy and was promoted to vice president and chief operating officer of QNI's Broadcast Division. He continued to rise through the ranks of QNI, eventually becoming president and CEO of the

company in 2009, after his father's retirement. As he thrived at QNI, Ralph also became involved in national broadcasting advocacy. He served as chairman of the Illinois Broadcasters Association and as a board member of the National Association of Broadcasters—working to ensure Americans in any city, town, or county had access to the emergency alerts, educational content, and community news that broadcasting provides. While Ralph has since retired from QNI following its sale in 2021, he remains involved in broadcasting, owning a station that serves Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Ralph's passion for broadcasting is only matched by his commitment to Quincy, carrying on his father's advocacy for development in western and central Illinois. In 1997, Ralph led the establishment of the Community Foundation with one simple goal: to make it possible for "anyone and everyone to realize their philanthropic wishes." For 29 years, the Community Foundation has raised more than \$10 million for various nonprofits in west central Illinois and northeast Missouri. Organizations ranging from Quincy's own Blessing Hospital to the Quincy Symphony Orchestra have received generous support from the Community Foundation, allowing them to continue their great work in service of their community. In 2022, the Community Foundation celebrated its 25th anniversary, and in honor of this milestone, Ralph donated \$2 million to establish the Ralph Oakley Family Fund, cementing his support for families and communities across Illinois for years to come.

Ralph's philanthropy for Quincy and the surrounding community extends beyond the Community Foundation. He served on the boards of both the Quincy Area Chamber of Commerce and the Quincy Public Schools Foundation and chaired the United Way of Adams County's annual campaign. Ralph also continues to support his alma mater Quincy University, after serving as chairman of the university's board of trustees from 1999 to 2004. In 2021, Ralph and the Oakley family made the largest contribution in the university's history to create new scholarships, classrooms, and programs. Quincy University is the lifeblood of the Gem City, and the Oakley family donation will help ensure that it remains ready and able to support the region for generations to come.

Ralph's legacy can be felt in the broadcasting industry and across Illinois. His work both in and outside of the studio makes him well deserving of the Chuck Sherman Television Leadership Award. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to my friend Ralph on this accomplishment and thank him for all he has done in service to his community.

225TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN OF LEEDS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, in 1801, a small town nestled between Androscoggin Lake and River was incorporated and named after Leeds, England, the ancestral home of the first settlers Thomas and Roger Stinchfield. Today, it is an honor to join the people of Leeds, ME, in celebrating the 225th anniversary of a community that is a beautiful place to live, work, and raise a family.

Leeds, initially part of the Littleborough Plantation, was settled as early as the 1780s, with fertile land and plentiful water nourishing the first families. As Leeds developed, so did agriculture and small-scale manufacturing that proved to be not only self-sufficient but also the backbone of its economy. By the mid-19th century, improved roads connected Leeds to other surrounding communities that made it a center for agriculture and, eventually, recreation. Today, Leeds' natural beauty has led to the rise of boating and fishing on Androscoggin Lake, turning quaint farmstands into a seasonal retreat in central Maine.

The proud history of Leeds is etched in stone atop Monument Hill, where the Civil War Peace Monument stands as a tribute to the town's extraordinary service. Erected by the distinguished Howard brothers in 1895, this monument honors the 161 local soldiers and sailors who served in the American Civil War, in which Leeds had the highest per capita enlistment of any town in Maine. Major General Oliver Otis Howard's leadership shaped the Nation's path toward emancipation, making his impact felt today at Howard University, which he founded. The Howard brothers' commitment to freedom spanned beyond the battlefield by bringing escaped slave George Washington "Wash" Kemp, who served in the Union Army alongside both Howard brothers, back to Leeds, making it his eventual home.

Another fascinating example of Leeds' dedication to public service can be seen in the Curtis Homestead Conservation Area. The 360-acre property that once served as the home of Maine Governor Kenneth M. Curtis features remnants of a farmhouse and barn built in the 1840s, offering visitors a glimpse into life in Leeds during the 19th century.

Maine is known as Vacationland, and Leeds is one reason why. With water for recreation, nature preserves for walking and hiking, and a rich history, there is always something to explore.

The celebration of Leeds' landmark anniversary is not merely about the passage of time; it is about resilience, service, and the enduring strength of community. We honor the people of Leeds who stood together in times of war, worked together to build a thriving town, and created a legacy that spans more than two centuries. Their effort and dedication ensure that Leeds has a bright future.