



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2017

No. 34

Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 24 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:55 p.m., the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the chair to prepare for Washington's Farewell Address.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PRESIDENT'S JOINT SESSION ADDRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I welcome the majority leader and everyone back after the first district work period of the year. Tomorrow night, the President will give his first address to a joint session of Congress. I will have more to say later this afternoon at the National Press Club about the first

month of the Trump administration and what we can expect from the speech. For now, I will just say that if past is prologue, the President will come to Congress with a populist message in an attempt to cloak what has been a hard-right, anti-working person administration.

His words are populist. He talks as though he favors the working men and women of America, but his actions are straight out of the hard-right playbook, which makes it easier for the special interests and puts greater burdens on the backs of the working class and the middle class.

Every American should be looking at what this President is doing, not saying, because, thus far, the two have been vastly different.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Now for the ACA, Mr. President. This past week, Republicans across the country in both Chambers were greeted in townhalls by angry constituents who waited in long lines and packed high school gyms, auditoriums, and community centers wall to wall to question their Republican representatives about their plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Americans are speaking loudly and clearly that their jobs, their hospitals—particularly rural hospitals—and their health care is on the line and want to know how Republicans plan to replace the law. On Friday, we saw the outline of the Republican plan. Like every single draft plan that Republicans have come up with, the outline we saw on Friday would raise costs and provide fewer benefits to average Americans and put the insurance companies back in the driver's seat. Average Americans under this Republican plan will get less, and they will pay more.

Today, President Trump is meeting with the insurance companies about this plan. What happened to the President we saw on the campaign trail railing against the special interests? It

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Infinite Spirit, maker of Heaven and Earth, we experience peace because of the knowledge that You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. May we continue to find rest and peace in You as You continue to be our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. Loose us from the changes that create cynicism, pessimism, and despair. Remind us of the foolishness of seeking security apart from You.

Lord, bless the Members of this body. Help them in the making of laws to execute justice for the oppressed and to set the captives free.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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turns out that the special interests are getting their way at the expense of working Americans—less coverage, higher premiums, fewer sick people insured.

My Republican friends listened to the outcry from their constituents: Don't repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with a threadbare health insurance plan that puts insurance companies back in charge. Keep the law and work with Democrats on reasonable fixes.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Finally, Mr. President, I want to comment again on the Cabinet. The three nominees the Senate will consider this week are similar to the rest of the President's Cabinet in the number of conflicts of interest they possess, their lack of confidence and expertise, and their hard-right ideology. The Cabinet confirmation process has been like an assembly line of the least qualified and most conflicted nominees I have seen in my time in the Senate.

Just yesterday, the nominee to be the Secretary of the Navy withdrew his name from consideration because he couldn't disentangle himself from his massive personal business interests. He may have more integrity than some of the others who continued through the process with conflicts of interest hanging over their heads. The Secretary of the Navy nominee is 1 of 14 relatively high-level administration officials who have left, resigned or withdrawn their nomination in just the first month of this Presidency. That list includes the nominee for Secretary of Labor, Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, and the principal National Security Advisor.

It is clear the Trump administration did not properly vet or carefully select these picks. With that in mind, the Senate should carefully scrutinize the nominees this week on the floor and vote their conscience.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. STRANGE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, since Inauguration Day, the Senate has been slow making its way through confirming Cabinet Secretaries. Democrats, it seems, have used just about every trick in the book to try to slow down the process. There are Democrats in the Senate who are delaying things even when other Democrats in the Senate support the person who has actually been nominated by the President. (Mr. YOUNG assumed the Chair.)

Remember when President Obama took office, Republicans were far more willing to let the President have the

team he wanted. He had won the election and was entitled to his Cabinet.

We are now 39 days into President Trump's term, and the Senate has confirmed now 17 of his nominees—17 over 39 days. President Obama got 20 of his people confirmed in the first 9 days. It does seem the more the Democrats delay, the more the American people will see the Democrats are just being childish and spiteful.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

One of the most recent people whom the Democrats have been delaying is Congressman RYAN ZINKE. He has been nominated to be Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We have all heard about his qualifications for the job. His time serving the people of Montana in the State senate and in the House of Representatives is something that people hold up as to why he is qualified for this job. He is a Navy SEAL. He is an adopted member of the Fort Peck Tribes. He is a westerner. As a westerner, RYAN ZINKE understands the importance of the position he has been now nominated to fill.

Don't take my word for it. Listen to Senator TESTER, Democrat from Montana, who came to the confirmation hearing for Congressman ZINKE and he said so. He said: "I believe it is very important for someone who knows the West to serve as Interior Secretary."

He was full of praise for this nominee. Senator TESTER took the time to come to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and tell all of us on the committee about his support for Congressman ZINKE to be Secretary of the Interior. He actually said: "I am honored to introduce Congressman Zinke to this committee." He went on to say: "I trust that this Navy SEAL will shoot straight as they always do."

The Department of Interior manages an incredible amount of acreage and water resources. It is responsible for protecting thousands of species of animals and plants. The person who heads up this Department has a very big and important job to do. We need someone in this job who can work with the people who are most invested in the good stewardship of our natural resources, and that is the people who actually live on the land. I believe that Congressman ZINKE will do exactly that. He will work with States and with communities to find solutions that work for everyone, because America's natural resources actually belong to all of us.

He understands that Washington does not always get the answers right, and he certainly knows that when Washington comes up with a one-size-fits-all approach, it can do real damage. During Congressman ZINKE's confirmation hearing, I asked him about some of the policies that we have seen over the past few years that have been restricting American energy production. He said he thinks the correct policy on energy development is "all of the above."

Well, I agree. Do Democrats really object to using all of our options for creating the energy that we need to power our economy and our country?

We should be trying to make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, and do it in ways that don't raise costs for American families. I think Congressman ZINKE understands this. I think he will do all that he can to make sure that we achieve what we need, which is the right balance.

Democrats on the committee actually think so as well. His nomination was reported out of the committee on a strong bipartisan vote of 16 to 6. That is a significant bipartisan show of support for the nominee. But the obstructionists on the other side should listen to their colleagues and give up the delaying tactics and senseless obstruction that is ongoing.

NOMINATION OF RICK PERRY

There is one other nomination I would like to mention today, and that is the nomination of Gov. Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy. Once again, we have a nominee who is totally qualified to lead the Department. Democrats have no real objection to the candidate. They just want to delay. We need to have an Energy Secretary in place as soon as possible. Again, this was the nominee who drew bipartisan praise in his confirmation hearings. For his nomination, again, there was a bipartisan vote in the committee—a strong vote of 16 to 7.

Senator JOE MANCHIN, a member of the Democratic leadership, actually introduced Governor Perry at the hearing. He said that Rick Perry is "uniquely qualified to hold this position." Senator MANCHIN praised the nominee's ability to work across the aisle to get things done. That is important. It is important in a Cabinet Secretary, and it is important for all of us here in the Senate. I appreciate Senator MANCHIN and the other Democrats who reached across the aisle and have supported Rick Perry's nomination. They are willing to put aside the petty calls for gridlock that some of the other Members of their party have been making.

I mention the importance of having a responsible all-of-the-above energy policy. This includes energy sources such as liquefied natural gas. The problem right now is that the Energy Department has a very large backlog of permits to export this gas. These are permits where all of the environmental reviews have already been completed. Still, permits haven't been issued. The Energy Department has just been sitting on the permits. Bipartisan majorities in Congress have said that we need to speed up this permitting process. It is time for us to have a new Energy Secretary in office today to start tackling this backlog. That is something we need this Department to do. There is no need or reason for delay.

Governor Perry knows how to get this Department focused, how to get it moving, and how to make sure it is doing its job. There are reasonable and responsible Democrats here in the Senate who agree that doing the job is more important than just trying to run

out the clock. Governor Perry and Congressman ZINKE have been nominated to do important jobs for the American people. They are qualified. They are ready. We need them in office to do these jobs now. There is bipartisan support. We need to vote not some day in the future; we need to vote now.

The President deserves to have his Cabinet. He needs them in place. It is regrettable that a group of Democrats have decided to stand in the way of what is best for the American people—deliberate obstruction.

So I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop the charade and stop the delays. It is time for us to vote on these nominations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose President Trump's nomination of Wilbur Ross for Secretary of Commerce. Mr. Ross is a Wall Street billionaire with a long history of profiting from the suffering of others. He also has shady ties to Vladimir Putin's Russia. That is just his record. Because of that record, I do not have confidence that he will protect the interests of the American people as Secretary of Commerce.

This administration's disturbing ties to Russia have been all over the news. Here is what has been publicly reported as of today.

Our intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian Government conducted a successful series of cyber attacks against the United States designed to help Donald Trump get elected President. Our intelligence agencies are actively examining a dossier alleging that the Russian Government has collected compromising information on President Trump, and numerous press reports indicate that investigators have already corroborated some of that dossier's contents.

The President's National Security Advisor resigned in disgrace and is the subject of an FBI counterintelligence investigation for his conversations with the Russian Government before the inauguration, conversations that may have been illegal and conversations that he has apparently lied about in public.

Knowingly or unknowingly, the Vice President of the United States has repeated these lies on national television. According to CNN, high-level advisers close to then-Presidential nominee Donald Trump were in constant communication during the campaign with Russians known to U.S. intelligence.

CNN confirmed the New York Times' original investigation with "multiple

current and former intelligence law enforcement and administration officials." Our allies documented regular calls between the Trump campaign and the Russians, confirming the reports of U.S. intelligence agencies. According to reports published in Newsweek, "the British government obtained information that people acting on behalf of Russia were in contact with members of the Trump campaign."

Many news outlets have reported on U.S. intelligence worries that NATO allies will no longer share sensitive information because they fear the new administration could share it with Russia. When asked about the regular points of contact between Russian intelligence operatives and his most senior campaign staff, President Trump refused to take the question seriously. He claimed the multiple reports of staff communications with Russian were "fake news."

Behind the scenes, Trump's chief of staff was pressuring the FBI to help cover up the links between Russia and the Trump campaign. We are 1 month into the Trump Presidency. I wish this were not happening. I wish things were normal, but this is not normal. It is shameful if we ignore all of it as we evaluate the President's nominees to critical foreign policy and national security jobs.

In this context, Mr. Ross's connections to Russia raise dangerous issues. We know that Ross installed a former KGB official and close associate of Vladimir Putin as the vice chairman of the Bank of Cyprus, a bank that Mr. Ross controlled and a bank that was flooded with Russian money. Now, how closely connected was this former KGB official to Vladimir Putin? Here is one hint. He was so closely connected to Putin that he was given a \$100 million payout by a Russian-controlled mining company as a golden parachute. He wasn't even the only Putin pal on Mr. Ross's board. That is right. Mr. Ross wanted the bank he controlled to have multiple board members from Putin's inner circle.

Mr. Ross surrounds himself with Russian oligarchs, and he has invested financially in their success. As he explained during his testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, Mr. Ross has no intention of divesting from Diamond Shipping, a company that operates 33 oil tankers and jointly charters with even more. So a man who personally selected multiple Vladimir Putin associates to serve with him on the board of the bank he controls has been totally open about his plan to continue profiting from oil tankers shuttling over \$1 billion worth of crude oil through international waters while serving as Commerce Secretary.

It is not just one shipping company. Mr. Ross is retaining his investments in 11—11 separate entities, mostly private companies registered in the Cayman Islands. Among his retained interests, the state-owned China Investment Company will be one of Mr. Ross's largest fellow investors.

We have never seen a Cabinet like this in history. Like many of President Trump's other nominees and like President Trump himself, this nominee seems to see his time in public service as a chance to increase his own wealth. In other words, on any given deal, he might be working for the American people or he might just be working for himself. We will have no way to know.

President Trump has apparently asked Mr. Ross to lead American trade policy. He claims to want aggressive enforcement of antidumping and currency manipulation rules, which sounds great, but when Ross actually has this job, is he really going to be thinking about American workers or will he be thinking about how to make his KGB buddy from the Bank of Cyprus just a little richer or will he be thinking about how to help out his own oil tankers circling the globe or will he be thinking about his offshore companies and his coinvestors from China or will he be thinking about the next billion dollars he plans to make?

The American people should not be left guessing about who Mr. Ross will be working to protect. There is significant reason to believe the President of the United States has substantial financial ties with Russia, but nobody actually knows any of the details because he has failed to reveal his tax returns.

Now President Trump expects the Senate to rubberstamp his nomination of a top banker to Vladimir Putin's buddies to run the Commerce Department of the United States. This is dangerous and I will vote no. Mr. Ross's financial ties with Russians and his worldwide business deals are not the only problem with this nomination. He is practically a cartoon stereotype of a Wall Street fat cat with no interest in anyone but himself. Ross ran a secret club of top Wall Street tycoons called Kappa Beta Phi. I am not making this up. It is actually true.

So he runs this secret club, which apparently gathers every year to get drunk and entertain themselves by putting on off-color skits that make fun of the millions of Americans they have swindled over the years. That certainly reflects Mr. Ross's world view. This is a man who made a fortune from the housing crisis at the expense of working families. After buying the servicing rights to over \$100 billion in subprime loans, Mr. Ross swiftly got to work cheating borrowers out of their homes.

Here are just a few of the examples of Mr. Ross's approach to business: lying to borrowers about loan modifications; charging borrowers fees that were not authorized; taking payments from borrowers, then not applying those payments to their loans; forcing homeowners insurance on borrowers who already had homeowners insurance; robo-signing fraudulent foreclosure documents.

The violations were so widespread, his company had to settle with 49

States. Let me repeat that—49 States. A man who builds a fortune off illegally cheating people out of their homes has no business running our Commerce Department.

So let's summarize. Mr. Ross has extensive ties to Russia. He plans to keep making money from his major oil shipping companies while working as Commerce Secretary. He has made billions off the backs of struggling homeowners, and in his free time he hangs out with Wall Street tycoons who sit around and make fun of everyone else. This is disgusting. For all of these reasons—for any of them, really—I urge my colleagues to reject this nomination.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:56 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 3 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. YOUNG).

READING OF WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, as amended by the order of February 1, 2017, the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. SASSE, will now read Washington's Farewell Address.

Mr. SASSE, at the rostrum, read the Farewell Address, as follows:

To the people of the United States:

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you at the same time to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country—and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation

might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself, and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me, still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise and as an instructive example in our annals that, under cir-

cumstances in which the passions agitated in every direction were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these states, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial,