

health on 27 occasions. His actions were challenged in court for not fulfilling the requirements of the Clean Air Act, and 27 times the court ruled against Mr. Wehrum.

One particular issue that he was involved in was mercury pollution. Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA has to reduce hazardous air pollutants like mercury, which is particularly harmful to children. Instead of protecting this population from mercury pollution, a neurotoxin, Mr. Wehrum decided to advance the interests of polluters.

During his tenure, Mr. Wehrum also led efforts to prevent EPA from addressing climate pollution. Fortunately, the Supreme Court eventually ruled in favor of regulating greenhouse gases, forcing the Agency to take action.

After the Senate blocked his nomination in 2006, Mr. Wehrum decided he would undermine the mission of the Agency on behalf of polluters. In his current role as a corporate attorney, he has sued the EPA multiple times on behalf of clients in the oil, gas, coal, and chemical industries to undermine protections that safeguard public health and the environment. He has used his current position to attack the renewable fuel standard, which requires biofuels to be blended with gasoline—something the big oil companies hate because it means serious competition for dirty oil. So as an attorney for the American Petroleum Institute—the trade association that represents ExxonMobil, BP, and a number of other oil and gas giants—Mr. Wehrum sued the EPA at least four times in an effort to weaken the RFS, the renewable fuel standard. This is deeply troubling, considering that if he gets this job, he will be in charge of administering the RFS, which will allow him to implement his clear agenda. He has done nothing to lead us to believe he would do anything but side with the giant oil companies.

The facts are clear. The RFS boosts energy security, it creates rural jobs, and it is better for the environment than oil. You are never going to see an ethanol spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Colleagues on both sides of the aisle agree that despite this bipartisan support, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has reduced advanced biofuel blending targets for 2018. Now, with Mr. Wehrum's nomination, I have even less confidence in this administration upholding Congress's intent on the RFS.

He also has a history of willful ignorance of science. When asked whether he believes that greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the main drivers of climate change, Mr. Wehrum stated that he believes it is an open question—an answer that runs contrary to the conclusion of 97 percent of climate scientists and runs counter to the “National Climate Assessment” that was released by this administration just last week.

Emissions from fossil fuel-fired powerplants are some of the main contributors to climate change. We know this.

At the Office of Air and Radiation, Mr. Wehrum would oversee the repeal of standards that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector, the Clean Power Plan. He would also be in charge of crafting a weaker replacement, if any.

Let me be clear. A weak standard is an affront to the public health and safety of future generations.

To overcome the challenge of climate change, we must transform our economy to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If we don't, Americans and future generations will pay an unacceptable price. But rather than driving innovation and pushing us to overcome this challenge, the administration has ordered a retreat. You can see that retreat everywhere, in a budget that would gut funding for science and innovation, in an EPA that values industry profits over the welfare of the public.

The 23rd annual United Nations climate change conference is taking place right now in Bonn, Germany. Two years ago, 195 nations came together to sign the Paris climate agreement in a historic display of the power of collective human will, and they did it because of U.S. leadership.

Now contrast that to earlier this year, when President Trump ordered the United States to retreat. He announced that he was pulling us out of the Paris climate agreement.

Yesterday, Syria announced that it would ratify the agreement. They were the last remaining nation to not be a part of this agreement. We now stand alone as the only country in the world choosing not to be part of the global effort to combat climate change.

Let's be clear. The President has not only ceded leadership, but he has isolated the United States from the global community. He has put us in this dangerous situation simply to protect short-term profits of the fossil fuel industry.

Mr. Wehrum would exacerbate this administration's wrong-headed approach. He is anti-science, anti-public health, anti-environment. That is why the Senate blocked his nomination in 2006. The Senate recognized then that he wasn't fit for the job. He is even less fit today.

I oppose his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 400, 401, and 402.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Melissa Sue Glynn, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Enterprise Integration); Cheryl L. Mason, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals for a term of six years; and Randy Reeves, of Mississippi, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Glynn, Mason, and Reeves nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

VETERANS DAY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as we prepare to commemorate Veterans Day this weekend, I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the dedicated veterans who have served our country so bravely over the years. Only in a great country such as ours do we have so many willing and able citizens who volunteer for duty. These selfless individuals understand the importance of protecting our country and are willing to give their lives to do it.

Many of these brave men and women make the ultimate sacrifice, such as my own brother, Jesse Morlan Hatch who was killed in World War II. SSG Aaron Butler of Utah also comes to mind. Staff Sergeant Butler was tragically killed in the line of duty last summer while serving in Afghanistan. The valor of patriots like Jesse and Aaron is indicative of all men and women who volunteer to serve in our Armed Forces. I have always had a deep-rooted respect for America's servicemembers and her veterans.

On behalf of the State of Utah, I would also like to express our humble gratitude for our Nation's veterans and active servicemembers. Throughout