

a.m., and we were starting off about 7 in the morning.

I came down the elevator, and as happened, the elevator door opened up. Across from me was Luther. He said: How did you sleep, Mr. Chairman? I said: As well as could be expected. Finally, I told him what happened.

After all of that, I had probably one of the best days in my service in the Senate, visiting a State I had not visited before. I talked to every commodity group, every farm organization representative. We went out to many different farms. I learned firsthand that a big export factor to China is peanuts. If we are going to be making friends with China—or at least getting to a situation where we have a better relationship with any country—as you know, agriculture can be a tool for peace. It is a stabilizing factor. It becomes a national security situation. We talked about this at length.

I must say I was very impressed with the folks I met there and the respect they had for you, Luther, for wanting to be on the Ag Committee, obviously, and for your record as attorney general and your public service. To a person, they were committed to you and thanking you for your service on the Agriculture Committee.

So wherever you go, whatever you do, I know you are an Aggie. I know you will continue to fight for your farmers, and, as you know, we are going through a pretty rough patch.

Personally, I want to thank you for your friendship, and, personally, I want to thank you for the message you gave to all Senators here, which I think should be mandatory in our quest to see if we can't achieve a better situation in working together to find solutions. The Senator from West Virginia and I feel the same way, and I know whatever you are going to do, you will do so with dignity and with respect and with strong leadership.

Thank you, my friend.

Mr. STRANGE. Thank you.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to bid farewell and to express my gratitude to Senator LUTHER STRANGE as he leaves the U.S. Senate. During his too-brief tenure here, he established an admirable reputation for hard work, dedication to his State of Alabama and our Nation, and a commitment to principles.

Senator STRANGE was appointed to the Senate last February to fill the vacancy created when Senator Jeff Sessions became Attorney General of the United States. From the start, it was clear that Senator STRANGE's pride in his home State was matched only by his humility at being selected to represent the State he loves.

Building on the reputation he earned as attorney general for Alabama, Senator STRANGE established himself here as a determined advocate for the rule of law and defender of our Constitution. From preserving the Senate traditions that foster full and open debate to supporting our veterans and

strengthening our national security and our economy, Senator STRANGE has worked on a number of important initiatives.

Senator STRANGE has met the obligations of his office with energy and dedication, and it has been an honor to serve with him in the U.S. Senate. I wish him and Melissa all the best in the years to come and look forward to many more contributions and accomplishments from this distinguished American.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I just want to say on the record how much I have enjoyed serving with the Senator from Alabama. He has meant a great deal to this institution, to this body during his short time here, and it is sad to see him go.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session, as under the previous order.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joseph Balash, of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form.

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Minnesota.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, a couple of months ago, I felt we had entered an important moment in the history of this country. We were finally beginning to listen to women about the ways in which men's actions affect them. The moment was long overdue. I was excited for that conversation and hopeful it would result in real change that made life better for women all across the country and in every part of our society.

Then the conversation turned to me. Over the last few weeks, a number of women have come forward to talk about how they felt my actions had affected them. I was shocked. I was upset, but in responding to their

claims, I also wanted to be respectful of that broader conversation because all women deserve to be heard and their experiences taken seriously. I think that was the right thing to do. I also think it gave some people the false impression that I was admitting to doing things that, in fact, I haven't done. Some of the allegations against me are simply not true, others I remember very differently.

I said at the outset, the Ethics Committee was the right venue for these allegations to be heard and investigated and evaluated on their merits; that I was prepared to cooperate fully and that I was confident in the outcome.

An important part of the conversation we have been having the last few months has been about how men abuse their power and privilege to hurt women. I am proud that during my time in the Senate, I have used my power to be a champion of women and that I have earned the reputation as someone who respects the women I work alongside every day. I know there has been a very different picture of me painted over the last few weeks, but I know who I really am.

Serving in the U.S. Senate has been the great honor of my life. I know in my heart that nothing I have done as a Senator—nothing—has brought dishonor on this institution, and I am confident the Ethics Committee would agree.

Nevertheless, today I am announcing that in the coming weeks, I will be resigning as a Member of the U.S. Senate. I, of all people, am aware that there is some irony in the fact that I am leaving, while a man who has bragged on tape about his history of sexual assault sits in the Oval Office, and a man who has repeatedly preyed on young girls campaigns for the Senate with the full support of his party, but this decision is not about me; it is about the people of Minnesota. It has become clear that I can't both pursue the Ethics Committee process and, at the same time, remain an effective Senator for them.

Let me be clear. I may be resigning my seat, but I am not giving up my voice. I will continue to stand up for the things I believe in as a citizen and as an activist, but Minnesotans deserve a Senator who can focus with all her energy on addressing the challenges they face every day.

There is a big part of me that will always regret having to walk away from this job with so much work left to be done, but I have faith the work will continue because I have faith in the people who have helped me do it.

I have faith in the dedicated, funny, selfless, brilliant young men and women on my staff. They have so much more to contribute to our country, and I hope that as disappointed as they may feel today, everyone who has worked for me knows how much I admire and respect them.

I have faith in my colleagues, especially my senior Senator, AMY KLOBUCHAR. I would not have been able to

do this job without her guidance and wisdom. I have faith—or at least hope—that Members of the Senate will find the political courage necessary to keep asking the tough questions, hold this administration accountable, and stand up for the truth.

I have faith in the activists who organized to help me win my first campaign and who have kept on organizing to help fight for the people who needed us—kids facing bullying, seniors worried about the price of prescription drugs, Native Americans who have been overlooked for far too long, working people who have been taking it on the chin for a generation, everyone in the middle class, and everyone aspiring to join it.

I have faith in the proud legacy of progressive advocacy that I have had the privilege to be a part of. I think I probably repeated these words 10,000 times over the years, Paul Wellstone's famous quote: "The future belongs to those who are passionate and work hard." It is still true. It will always be true.

Most of all, I have faith in Minnesota. A big part of this job is going around the State and listening to what people need from Washington, but more often than not, when I am home, I am blown away by how much Minnesota has to offer the entire country and the entire world. The people I have had the honor of representing are brilliant and creative and hard-working. Whoever holds this seat next will inherit the challenge I have enjoyed for the last 8½ years, being as good as the people you serve.

This has been a tough few weeks for me, but I am a very, very lucky man. I have a beautiful, healthy family whom I love and who loves me very much. I am going to be just fine.

I would just like to end with one last thing. I did not grow up wanting to be a politician. I came to this relatively late in life. I had to learn a lot on the fly. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't always fun. I am not just talking about today. This is a hard thing to do with your life. There are a lot of long hours and late nights and hard lessons, and there is no guarantee that all your work and sacrifice will ever pay off. I won my first election by 312 votes. It could have easily gone the other way. Even when you win, progress is far from inevitable. Paul Wellstone spent his whole life working for mental health parity, and it didn't pass until 6 years after Paul died.

This year, a lot of people who didn't grow up imagining they would ever get involved in politics have done just that. They have gone to their first protest march or made their first call to a Member of Congress or maybe even taken the leap and put their names on a ballot for the first time.

It can be such a rush, to look around at a room full of people ready to fight alongside you, to feel that energy, to imagine that better things are possible. But you, too, will experience setbacks

and defeats and disappointments. There will be days when you will wonder whether it is worth it.

What I want you to know is that even today, even on the worst day of my political life, I feel like it has all been worth it. "Politics," Paul Wellstone told us, "is about the improvement of people's lives." I know that the work I have been able to do has improved people's lives. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

For a decade now, every time I would get tired, discouraged, or frustrated, I would think about the people I was doing this for, and it would get me back up on my feet. I know the same will be true for everyone who decides to pursue a politics that is about improving people's lives, and I hope you know that I will be fighting alongside you every step of the way.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The Senator from Alaska.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of the Balash nomination, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 167, as under the previous order.

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

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, today I am gratified to be finally debating and voting on the nomination of Joe Balash to be the U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Minerals.

I have been coming to the floor, as have a lot of my colleagues, making the case about how it has taken too long to get good people into the Federal Government. I am sure I will have to give that speech maybe a few more times—I hope not—to finally get people who want to serve, who have been nominated by the President, to be confirmed by the Senate, to move them. It doesn't help the American people that we just delay well-qualified Americans who want to serve their country just for the sake of delay. It is happening, but I am not going to focus on that today.

I actually want to thank the Democratic Whip, Senator DURBIN, who was actually very helpful in trying to move this nomination, which has been stalled on the Senate floor for many weeks now. Joe Balash was nominated by the President in July. I appreciate the cooperative spirit from my colleague from Illinois, and I thank him again for that.

This is a very important position in the U.S. Government. The Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management entails supervision and overseeing the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. It is very important for the entire country. It is particularly important for my State, the great

State of Alaska, and for so many others where Federal lands make up an enormous part of the State.

Yesterday, my colleague and friend, Senator LEE from Utah, talked to a number of us about how much Federal lands constitute different States in terms of the overall percentage. A lot of Americans don't know this. Usually, if you live on the east coast, you don't have Federal land as a big part of your State, but in Alaska, it is 61 percent; Idaho, 61 percent; Utah, 63 percent; Nevada, almost 80 percent. These positions in the Department of the Interior are enormously important.

This is a very important job, and I am glad to see we are finally getting to vote on it because it is important to help manage resources that we have in abundance but also protect the environment. We all love our environment. Alaska has the most pristine, beautiful environment in the world, and we know how to protect it. We also have enormous opportunities for jobs in energy on public land. What is in all the Federal statutes that Joe is going to be in charge of implementing is that you can do both. You can do both. You can protect the environment of this great Nation, and you can also utilize these incredible resources that we have on public lands. In essence, that is what his job is going to be all about.

I encourage my colleagues to look at Joe Balash's confirmation hearing and his background because he is probably one of the most qualified people to hold this job in the entire country—in the entire country. Joe Balash comes from a long, distinguished career of public service in Alaska. He was the commissioner of natural resources in Alaska, and he was the deputy commissioner of natural resources in Alaska, which manages one of the largest portfolios of land, water, minerals, oil, gas, and timber of anyplace in the world—not just in the country, in the world. Very few countries have more resources than we do in Alaska, and for years, Joe Balash was in charge of managing those. That makes him super well qualified for this job.

As DNR commissioner, he oversaw 100 million acres of uplands, State land in Alaska—this is obviously bigger than most States in America; 40 to 60 million acres of submerged lands and tidelands; and resources that included managing over half a million barrels of oil production a day. Joe oversaw a workforce of over 1,100 people as the commissioner of natural resources and a budget of \$170 million a year.

Joe understands how to build consensus, how to navigate State and Federal lands issues and interests, and, importantly, how to work to responsibly develop our resources and grow our economy, while always understanding that our lands sustain us and that stringent environmental safeguards are absolutely necessary for all Americans.

Let me say one other thing about Joe Balash. You can look at the bio, you can look at the experience, but you

also need to know the man. When I was the commissioner of the department of natural resources, Joe Balash worked for me as my deputy, and for the past almost 3 years, he has worked as my chief of staff here in the Senate.

Perhaps more than any other issue—experience, a super hard worker—he is a man of integrity, a man of character, and a man who cares deeply about his country and wants the best for Americans and for Alaskans.

I can't think of anyone more qualified—experience, character, integrity, knows the issues, cares about the environment—so I am strongly encouraging my colleagues to vote for Joe. He was voted out of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee in September with the support of every Senator in that committee, with the exception of one. When the committee looked at his experience and background and they heard about his integrity and character, there was enormous bipartisan support for Joe. I am hoping we will see that here in a few minutes when we come to vote.

I understand that one of my colleagues, unfortunately, is going to come down to the floor soon and encourage a vote against Joe. I am still not sure why. Maybe it is something related to a recusal issue between State and Federal lands in Alaska. I will be interested to hear what the recusal issue is.

Most recusal issues, by the way, as we look at confirmations in the Senate, relate to people who have interests in the private sector, and perhaps those private sector interests impact policy decisions. But when you have someone who has worked on lands issues in a State, the idea of being recused because you have expertise in policy from your State job when you go into a Federal job, to me, seems, well, outrageous. We will see what that argument is.

I do know that Joe Balash will follow the rules and regulations as they relate to ethics and conflicts in a steadfast way because I know who he is. So I again encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this extremely well-qualified nominee who has the character, knowledge, expertise, and experience for a very important job for the country and someone who is going to do a great job for Secretary Zinke and President Trump.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, the Department of the Interior is the steward and guardian of our public lands—our national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas. As the Supreme Court said more than a century ago, it is the Secretary of the Interior's responsibility to see that none of the public domain is given away to anyone who is not entitled to it.

As the steward and guardian of the public lands, the Secretary must represent the government and the people

of the Nation as a whole, not the special interests or even the interests of a single State. But the Secretary does not do his job alone; he has delegated his authority and responsibility for land and minerals management to the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. The Assistant Secretary exercises the Secretary's direction and supervision over the Bureau of Land Management. The Assistant Secretary needs to be someone who can discharge this important duty fairly and impartially. Equally important, though, he must be seen by the American people as someone capable of being a good steward of their public lands and not as someone who comes to the job with a predisposition to dispose of their public lands to special interests.

An impartial and unbiased decision-maker is a core element of the due process. The principle that no one can be the judge in his own case has been a hallmark of Anglo-American law for over 400 years. I believe confirming Mr. Balash to be Assistant Secretary of Land and Minerals Management would be contrary to this principle.

In 2014, Alaska's Department of Natural Resources filed a claim for 20,000 acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with the Bureau of Land Management. Alaska's Department of Natural Resources sought to remove the long-recognized boundary of the Refuge. It asked the Bureau of Land Management to convey the 20,000 acres of Refuge land that would then be outside the Refuge's boundary to the State of Alaska so that those lands could then be leased for oil and gas development.

Mr. Balash was the head of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources at the time it made its claim to the Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management properly rejected Alaska's claim. Alaska appealed the Bureau's decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, where the appeal is now pending. If the Senate confirms Mr. Balash to be the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, he will be overseeing the Bureau of Land Management. He will exercise the Secretary's direction and supervision over the Bureau of Land Management. He will be in a position of reversing the Bureau of Land Management's decision which originally denied Alaska's claim.

Moreover, Secretary Zinke has the authority to take jurisdiction of the case away from the Board of Land Appeals and to delegate that authority to decide the case to Mr. Balash. Mr. Balash may become the Interior Department's judge in the case that he initiated as Alaska's commissioner of natural resources.

That is my main concern. I asked Mr. Balash his plans to recuse himself from participating in the Department's consideration of Alaska's claim. I believe Mr. Balash thinks that he will comply with whatever the department's ethics office says the rules are—which is basi-

cally a 1-year recusal from being involved in that situation. That said, Mr. Balash, even under these current rules, could be in the position of being the final arbiter on a case he previously brought on expanding Alaska's claim to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. He alone could make the decision. He alone could reverse the decision on the State of Alaska's claim to the Bureau of Land Management—a claim that was turned down. He could reverse that. For that reason, I am not supporting Mr. Balash's nomination to this position today.

There are so many things that we have right now that are an unrelenting assault on our public lands and our environment by this administration, and there are many on the other side of the aisle who are supporting that. We have seen an unprecedented use of the extraordinary procedures of the Congressional Review Act to nullify carefully crafted rules to protect the public lands and environment. We have seen the Secretary of the Interior unlawfully postpone implementation of other lawful rules. We have witnessed and seen legislation on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge run through here without the proper processes and procedures. We saw the majority use the extraordinary procedure of budget reconciliation not to balance the budget, as it was intended, but to circumvent regular order. Only this week, we witnessed President Trump launch an unprecedented and unlawful assault on our national monuments. Mr. Balash, I fear, will become maybe an unwilling but nonetheless a participant in these assaults on our public lands. That is why I cannot at this point give my support to this nomination.

I know my colleague from Alaska has worked with him. I respect his opinion on this position. I hope he will respect mine. I do not think that at this point in time, without a better recusal, I can support Mr. Balash's nomination.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, President Trump has nominated Joseph Balash to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals at the Department of the Interior. In that role, Balash will oversee the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and head "Interior's management of all federal lands and waters, and their associated mineral and non-mineral resources, as well as the appropriate regulation of surface coal mining."

Balash has worked for years in Alaska politics, including as the former commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

In 2013, as the acting commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Joe Balash advocated for exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Balash petitioned the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service “to reconsider its decision to bar [Alaska] from conducting seismic studies in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

Also, Balash has stated that he supports the Trump administration re-writing the 5-year plan for the offshore oil and gas leasing plan, which could likely lead to new areas being opened up to offshore drilling.

I am a strong supporter of protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and oppose opening up new areas of the Atlantic to offshore drilling. For these reasons, I oppose his nomination for Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals at the Department of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I am here with my colleague from the State of Alaska, Senator SULLIVAN. We have heard his comments, his very strong support of the nomination of Joe Balash to be the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management. As he has indicated, he speaks as one who has great insight and knowledge, having worked with Mr. Balash for a period of years.

As we think about those who are willing to step up and serve in this new administration, I think it is particularly telling that when we have personal knowledge, when we have had these relationships, when we know intimately of a person's work ethic, of their dedication to issues and their willingness to serve, we pay particular attention to that.

I, too, stand in strong support of Joe Balash for this position, and I thank the Secretary of the Interior for placing his trust, placing his confidence in Mr. Balash to serve on his team at the Department of the Interior.

We have an individual who knows intimately the subject area to which he has been appointed. Joe is from a community by the name of North Pole. We are all thinking about the North Pole as we get closer to Christmas. I suggest that just being from Alaska is enough to convince me that he is qualified for this position, but, honestly, the breadth and depth of his experiences and his commitment, his care, his passion, his dedication to serving not only the people but the lands that we hold so dear is a great tribute to Joe Balash.

I have known and worked closely with him for years now, from the time that he was at the department of natural resources with then-Commissioner Sullivan to the time that he served as the chief of staff for Senator SULLIVAN. Both of those jobs have allowed Mr. Balash to demonstrate time and again his competence, his expertise on a wide range of issues, particularly the stewardship of our public lands.

We had an opportunity while in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to listen to a little bit of his background, his upbringing, and how he became so personally involved and intertwined with our public lands.

Then, if you think about the role he played when he was at the State as commissioner of natural resources, he had direct responsibility, management, and protection of 101 million acres of the State of Alaska. This is larger than the entire State of California—101 million acres. He also had control of a State park system containing 3.3 million acres of land, more than twice the size of Delaware. He is used to dealing with large areas of land and the complicated and complex issues that are associated with them. He genuinely understands how we can develop our natural resources while protecting the environment and sustaining the health of wildlife and ecosystems.

He is able to balance, he is able to understand people, and he is able, as he has demonstrated as a manager, to manage land—managing energy, minerals, timber, water, and renewable energies in a State as diverse as Alaska.

In our State—I am sure that Senator SULLIVAN has noted this—we have a constitutional mandate. It is written into our State's constitution that we manage lands for the maximum benefit of our people. That means working with folks from all different sorts of backgrounds; you don't get to pick and choose. We all have our opinions and many competing points of view. Joe was able to do that and do that well.

It is not easy to navigate, but I think Joe Balash has proven time and again that he is capable and is willing to work with everyone. Whether they are hunters, whether they are Tribes, whether they are in the environmental community, the conservation community, his ability to work with folks from all sides has been proven. Now he is ready to take this next step—to take it up a notch to the broader Federal level. I believe that he will make an exemplary Assistant Secretary, not just for those of us from Alaska but for our entire country.

He will oversee the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. He will, largely, be the Department's point person for the management of our Nation's working lands, those lands that are not reserved for conservation purposes. It will be his responsibility to strengthen our energy and our mineral security for generations to come.

There is no doubt in my mind that he is the right person to take this on. I mentioned he is from North Pole. He was a two-time State wrestling champion. That takes a little bit of discipline. I think he will be well suited and will be an able partner with Secretary Zinke but, really, an advocate for the American people.

He has proven that he has the work ethic to produce the value that Americans need and deserve from their public lands. I know that his management of the Department's assets—whether it is promoting responsible energy develop-

ment or ensuring access to Federal lands for sportsmen's activities—will be carried out with a dedication to transparency, to accountability, and to results.

On the sportsmen's side, I do understand he is an accomplished buck hunter, and we recognize him for that.

Mr. Balash was considered by those of us—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. Balash was considered by those of us on the Energy Committee at a hearing in early September. He was reported out 2 weeks later with strong bipartisan support. He has done everything that Members on both sides of the aisle have asked him to do. He has waited patiently over the course of nearly 3 months, as we seek to confirm him.

It was just mentioned by the ranking member that she has concerns about his ability and the recusal process. It was made very clear in committee with questions to Mr. Balash, as well as the follow-on with questions for the record, about some of the issues that Senator CANTWELL has raised. I think it is important to note that Mr. Balash pledged very clearly to consult with and follow the counsel of the agency's ethics office. He did that in committee, in a statement. He provided the same response in his QFRs. He said: I will consult with the Department's designated agency ethics official regarding this matter and fully comply with the ethics rules of the agency.

These are issues that have been asked, and they have been answered, certainly to the satisfaction of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and to this chairman, and to those who reported favorably on him from the committee. We are at the point where the Senate has now asked to confirm Mr. Balash. I wish it had come a little bit earlier, but we are where we are.

Again, I thank the Secretary for nominating Joe Balash for this very, very important and key role at the Department of the Interior. I thank Joe for being willing to continue his service to our Nation. I join Senator SULLIVAN, and a lot of Alaskans, in being tremendously proud of him. I urge all Members to support Mr. Balash's nomination to be our next Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management.

I yield back all debate time and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Balash nomination?

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 61, nays 38, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 310 Ex.]

YEAS—61

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heitkamp	Rounds
Carper	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hoehn	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Schatz
Collins	Isakson	Scott
Coons	Johnson	Shelby
Corker	Kennedy	Strange
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Toomey
Daines	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	Young
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Murkowski	

NAYS—38

Baldwin	Harris	Peters
Bennet	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—1

Franken

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Susan Parker Bodine, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to speak about the confirmation of Susan Bodine to lead the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

For those who may not know, that is a big job. This is an incredibly important job. The EPA's enforcement office protects the health of our citizens and our environment by ensuring that everyone is playing by the same rules. When bad actors don't follow the rules that we have put in place to maintain

a clean and healthy environment for all Americans, it is EPA's enforcement office that holds them accountable.

In the past, the actions taken by this office at EPA have led to reductions in toxic air pollution, as well as to the cleanup of contaminated lands and waterways across our country. In fact, last year alone, EPA's enforcement work required companies to invest some \$13.7 billion in similar cleanup efforts.

From the time that she was nominated, Susan Bodine's resume suggests, not just to me but to almost all of us, that she can play a very constructive role if she were confirmed to serve as head of EPA's enforcement office. Ms. Bodine has served as a staff member in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate for over a decade. She also spent time working in the administration of George W. Bush. Given that breadth of experience, I believe she has a good understanding of the relationship that should exist between the separate but equal branches of our government and the critical role that EPA's enforcement office plays.

When she was nominated for this position, Ms. Bodine was kind enough to come to my office and spend a considerable amount of time with me and with my staff to discuss the job and her qualifications, which I appreciated very much. She spoke of the work she had done for Senators INHOFE and BARRASSO, both of whom have taken seriously their oversight roles on the EPW Committee.

From the day Ms. Bodine and my staff and I met in my office, I have made explicitly clear to Ms. Bodine that while I think she is well qualified for this job, I also take seriously the oversight role that we play on the Environment and Public Works Committee.

From the day of that meeting with Ms. Bodine until now, my request has been consistent, yet fairly simple: The EPA should provide complete, adequate, and timely responses to the committee that oversees the work of that Agency. Absent a serious commitment to do so, I have consistently said that I would be unable to support moving forward almost any EPA nominees.

I have also said from the very beginning that I do not make such statements lightly or with any sense of joy, but I believe firmly that this body and its Members have a constitutional duty to perform rigorous oversight and that we must protect that responsibility regardless of which party happens to be in power. Over 200 days is far too long to wait for responses to serious inquiries, such as those about the toxic pesticides that this EPA has deemed safe after the previous administration proposed banning them. I know that no matter who is in charge, we can do better than that.

As my Democratic colleagues and I know all too well, we are not the majority party. We don't control the Senate or its activities or who is confirmed

here or who is debated on the floor. For instance, despite my many objections and those of my colleagues, Bill Wehrum was confirmed to head up the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. So my repeated requests have just been that—an ask with the hope that all of us, as Members of this body, could agree that certain responsibilities are more important than political wins. Some of my Republican colleagues have supported me in this, and I am grateful for that support.

As of late, I see that EPA is making a good-faith effort to begin to respond to our requests—requests of the minority within the Environment and Public Works Committee. I am now satisfied with many of these responses—not all but many of these responses—that they have sent so far, and I am pleased that we are seeing some real progress. I am hopeful—and I think I speak for the Democratic Members of the Environment and Public Works Committee and the Democratic Members of the Senate—that this progress will continue.

I have been privileged to serve in this body for some 17 years now. I think my colleagues know me fairly well, and I think they know that I try to be fair. I have voted for President Trump's nominees and for the nominees of past Republican Presidents. I do not have and have never had an interest in delay for the sake of delay. In fact, I said just last week that if a subset of the letters that were due back from EPA were completed in short order and were truly responsive, we could make progress in nominations. The Agency has done its part, and now we are here today with Ms. Bodine set to be confirmed by this body—not next week, not next month, today. I hope that this is the beginning of a new chapter and that EPA's responses to our oversight requests will be more timely going forward.

Having said that, my sincere congratulations to Susan Bodine and her family, as well as thanks to her family for sharing with us a good woman. I look forward to continuing working with her in her new role. I think I speak again for my colleagues—Democratic and Republican—on the committee and in the Senate. We look forward to continuing to work with her in this new role she will play, if she is confirmed here in a few seconds. We want to make sure that in that role, she will ensure that EPA's enforcement office remains an indispensable and credible cop on the beat.

With that, Mr. President, I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bodine nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.