

that our brave law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency personnel will be there for us on our worst days, forgetting that, for them, heroism and service are everyday realities. I would like to recognize some of our own colleagues who immediately sprang into action to assist the wounded. Senator CASSIDY and Congressmen WENSTRUP, BURGESS, ROE, and BUCSHON are all doctors by training, as are Senator CASSIDY's wife Laura and Congressman BUCSHON's wife Kathryn. All of them sprang into action and rushed to aid the victims, alongside our attending physician, Dr. Brian Monahan. Senator FLAKE and several others also hurried to help.

I thank all of them for their efforts when every moment counted, and I am proud to call them colleagues and friends.

FRA ADMINISTRATOR NOMINATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on a related matter, in the few days since last week's tragedy, yet another fatal train crash has already taken place. Two lives were lost yesterday when a passenger train and a freight train collided in South Carolina. Last December, three people were killed and scores were injured near Seattle when a passenger train jumped its tracks and crashed into a busy highway.

This worrying spate of accidents offers a sobering reminder that partisan obstruction has kept the Federal Railroad Administration, the top rail regulator, without an Administrator.

The President's nominee, Ronald Batory, has more than 40 years of rail experience. I know of no questions about his qualifications. He was reported out of committee by voice vote on August 2 of last year, meaning that this important safety regulator has now been sitting on the Senate calendar for 6 months—6 months. My Democratic colleagues are holding his nomination over a parochial issue that is completely unrelated to rail safety. This needs to come to an end.

The FRA Administrator is the Nation's top rail safety regulator. There is an urgent need and a highly qualified candidate. I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will put a stop to their partisan games on this front. We can and should confirm Mr. Batory today—today.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, our deadline to fund the Federal Government is this Thursday. Serious bipartisan negotiations continue on long-term spending levels, along with other important issues. I am optimistic that these talks will bear fruit.

In the meantime, as broader discussions continue, we have the opportunity to remove the uncertainty facing our all-volunteer Armed Forces.

Since the passage of the Budget Control Act, it has become increasingly ob-

vious that current funding levels are not sufficient for our Armed Forces to accomplish each of the missions and tasks that our Nation asks of them.

Secretary Mattis's new national defense strategy will require considerable new investment, and he has repeatedly pointed out that short-term continuing resolutions harm the readiness of our forces.

I am pleased that we are making real headway in our negotiations over spending caps and other important issues, but there is no reason why our warfighters need to continue to face uncertainty until all of the other issues are resolved.

Last week, a bipartisan majority in the House passed a bill that would fund our national defense through fiscal year 2018. Democrats and Republicans came together, voting to secure adequate, predictable, annual funding for our Armed Forces while we continue our productive negotiations on all these other subjects. The Senate will soon take up this House-passed bill.

I have recently heard many of my Democratic colleagues detail the harmful effects of short-term funding measures on our servicemembers. Soon, each one of us will have a chance to vote to give them the certainty they deserve while our other work continues.

TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, in the State of the Union Address last week, President Trump detailed signs that our Nation's economy is thriving under the policies of his administration and this Republican Congress. Evidence keeps piling up that good things happen when the government takes its foot off the brake and gets out of the way of American workers and job creators.

Last week, UPS, the largest private employer in my hometown of Louisville, KY, announced that tax reform will enable them to invest \$12 billion in expanding their smart logistics network, funding employee pensions, and other capital improvements.

Their chairman and CEO had this to say:

We applaud President Trump and Congress for their bold action. . . . Tax reform is a tremendous catalyst.

On Thursday, another major American employer, Lowe's, announced that it will give bonuses of up to \$1,000 to more than a quarter of a million hourly employees and expand family friendly employment benefits, like adoption assistance and paid parental leave.

The very same day, the major pharmaceutical company Amgen, which houses a distribution facility in Louisville, announced that tax reform is causing them to shift more of their planned investments here to the United States, including the construction of a new "next-generation manufacturing plant" right here at home.

Already, our historic tax reform law is giving employers the flexibility to

invest more, expand more, hire more American workers, and give bonuses, pay raises, and new benefits to their employees, and, already, middle-class families across the country are seeing the benefits.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the nomination of Andrei Iancu to be Under Secretary of Commerce and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Intellectual property is critical to our national economy because it encourages the innovation that improves lives and creates jobs. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office plays a critical role in fostering innovation by protecting intellectual property rights, so it is important that the office have strong and accountable leadership.

Mr. Iancu holds a B.S. and M.S. in engineering from the UCLA School of Engineering and a J.D. from the UCLA School of Law. He currently is the managing partner of the Los Angeles law firm Irell & Manella, where he has practiced intellectual property law since 1996. Mr. Iancu has represented both patent owners and accused infringers, large and small companies, and individuals in a large number of patent cases.

Mr. Iancu possesses strong legal qualifications, has a proven record in the field of intellectual property law, and is well respected in the intellectual property community. Last December, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved Mr. Iancu's nomination by a voice vote. I support Mr. Iancu's nomination, and I urge my colleagues to vote for him.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

Mr. JOHNSON. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. HEINRICH) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 28 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Baldwin	Gardner	Nelson
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Paul
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Harris	Reed
Booker	Hassan	Risch
Boozman	Hatch	Roberts
Brown	Heitkamp	Rounds
Burr	Heller	Rubio
Cantwell	Hirono	Sanders
Capito	Hoeven	Sasse
Cardin	Inhofe	Schatz
Carper	Isakson	Schumer
Casey	Johnson	Scott
Cassidy	Jones	Shaheen
Collins	Kaine	Shelby
Coons	Kennedy	Smith
Corker	King	Stabenow
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lankford	Tester
Cotton	Leahy	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	Manchin	Udall
Daines	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Enzi	Merkley	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Murphy	
Flake	Murray	

NOT VOTING—6

Alexander	Heinrich	Peters
Cochran	McCain	Toomey

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.

The majority leader.

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.

TRIBUTE TO JO MARSHALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate my friend Dr. Jo Marshall, president and CEO of the Somerset Community College, SCC, on her upcoming retirement. Taking over the helm of the school in Somerset, KY, in 2000, Jo has led the school through its unprecedented growth. When she leaves SCC at the end of June, she will leave behind a legacy of innovation, achievement, and inspiration.

Originally from Alabama, Jo worked as the vice president and dean at Chattahoochee Valley Community College before moving to Somerset with her husband, Scott, to accept the position as president and CEO of SCC. After he retired from the Alabama college system, Scott taught economics at Eastern Kentucky University until he passed away in 2011.

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System, KCTCS, operates 16 colleges, including SCC, serving nearly 80,000 students throughout Kentucky. Under Jo's leadership, SCC has become one of the preeminent members of KCTCS and one of the fastest growing community colleges in the Nation. Many of the students who graduate from SCC go on to make important contributions to their community and the economy.

The school, founded in 1965, has grown exponentially during Jo's presidency. She oversaw SCC's merger with the Somerset Technical College and the Laurel Technical College in 2003, expanding the number of programs offered to SCC's students. Under Jo's leadership, SCC also saw its largest enrollment in the school's history. To facilitate this growth, Jo oversaw the addition of seven new buildings to the institution. Further, she helped launch a scholarship foundation to help students of diverse economic backgrounds attend SCC to earn degrees or credentials with the goal of preparing them for successful careers. During a time of economic hardship for many Kentuckians, this was an important accomplishment in the region. Today that scholarship foundation is worth nearly \$1 million. These are just a few examples of what will make Jo's legacy at SCC a lasting one. By any measure, each of these notable accomplishments under her leadership improved SCC, its reputation, and its impact on students.

In addition to her commitment to growing SCC as an institution and en-

hancing its impact on its students and the region, Jo has also worked to support SCC students by providing them with the tools they need to succeed upon graduation. For example, working with local business leaders, she has established various programs to help students find good-paying, high-demand jobs by offering short-term certificates and diploma options. For SCC students wishing to continue their education, Jo has also worked with 4-year colleges and universities throughout Kentucky to help expand opportunities for students who wish to complete a bachelor's degree.

Because of her leadership, and the efforts of everyone involved at the school, SCC consistently has won a number of awards. SCC was named a Military Friendly School, and the Chronicle of Higher Education named it a Great College to Work For. In addition, SCC was called a Best Place to Work in Kentucky by the Best Companies Group every year for a decade. Finally, the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program, which "aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership" in an effort to help schools improve student outcomes, has also named SCC a Top 120 Community College in the United States. These national accolades for SCC under Jo's leadership showcase her passion for SCC, its faculty and students, and the community.

It would also come as no surprise to those of us who know Jo and her work that she has been the recipient of many well-earned awards as a result of her time at SCC. In 2011, the Somerset-Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce named her its Business Woman of the Year. She received the Master Musician's Festival Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015, and the Somerset Business and Professional Women's Club named Jo the Business Woman of the Year in 2017.

In addition to her transformational work at SCC, Jo has also dedicated her talents to the Southeastern Kentucky community in other ways. She currently serves on the board of directors for the Center for Rural Development and the Southern Kentucky Economic Development Corporation. Jo is also a former member of the Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital board of trustees.

Her community college peers have recognized her outstanding success at SCC. Phi Theta Kappa, one of the largest and most prestigious honor societies for community colleges, established the Marshall Leadership Award in 2013. Named in Jo's honor, the international award is given to Phi Theta Kappa advisors to boost their professional growth beyond the completion of professional degrees.

On a more personal note, I have always enjoyed being in Somerset and getting to visit with Jo in her position as president of SCC. In 2015, I had the privilege of participating in the school's "John Sherman Cooper Lecture Series," an annual reflection on