

support, both from Democrats and Republicans, precisely because of the importance of having a Secretary of State in place in this challenging world but also, again, because partisan differences should not be reflected to the outside. In this case, that has been lost in the name of the resistance.

When it comes to the critical position of Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, in particular, would be the man for the job as we deal with Russia, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and other challenges. I urge my Democratic colleagues to do the right thing for our country instead of catering to the most extreme elements of their party.

Most of my Senate colleagues supported Mike Pompeo when he was nominated to serve as CIA Director. They should support him now as Secretary of State so we can show the world that while we may have our political differences at home about any number of issues, we stand united as Americans when it comes to facing threats to our security abroad.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, John Cornyn, John Kennedy, Richard Burr, Mike Lee, David Perdue, Steve Daines, James Lankford, Pat Roberts, Johnny Isakson, Jeff Flake, Lindsey Graham, Patrick J. Toomey, Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, James E. Risch.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Stuart Kyle Duncan, of Louisiana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from California (Mrs. FEIN-

STEIN), the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), and the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 44, as follows:

#### [Rollcall Vote No. 81 Ex.]

#### YEAS—50

Alexander	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Gardner	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Capito	Heller	Rounds
Cassidy	Hoeven	Rubio
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Corker	Inhofe	Scott
Cornyn	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	Manchin	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Murkowski	

#### NAYS—44

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Sanders
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Schatz
Booker	Jones	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Coons	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Warner
Donnelly	Merkley	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Harris	Peters	

#### NOT VOTING—6

Duckworth	Hirono	McCain
Feinstein	Isakson	Nelson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 44.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume 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.

#### CUBA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I wish to address Cuba's undemocratic leadership transition and its implications for the Cuban people and U.S. foreign policy.

Today, in a highly scripted process, Cuba's National Assembly replaced Raul Castro, the country's gerontocratic dictator, with her apparent Miguel Diaz Canel. While this marks the first time in nearly 60 years that a Castro does not occupy the Cuban Presidency, this transition by no means portends the desperately needed political and economic change that Cubans desire, nor does it mean

that the Castro regime is no longer in charge.

This week's transition, characterized as a coronation and an attempt to institutionalize the Castro regime, is a ruse. This spectacle does not remotely come close to meeting internationally recognized standards for a democratic election. Cuba remains a single party, authoritarian state that denies its citizens their most fundamental freedoms.

Some contend that Mr. Diaz Canel could be a "Cuban Mikhail Gorbachev," and in seeking to reform the Castros' broken model, he will stumble into the collapse of Cuba's communist system. Such thinking fails to account for the fact that Mr. Diaz Canel's political ascent was forged under the same Communist Party that has perpetuated the Castros' decades-long stranglehold on Cuba.

More importantly, Raul Castro will maintain his position as the First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party. As article 5 of Cuba's authoritarian constitution states, "The Communist Party of Cuba [. . .] is the superior ruling force of society and the State . . ." Under such a structure, does anyone honestly think that Raul Castro won't continue calling the shots while his handpicked dauphin occupies the role of President?

As this political farce unfolds, I want to make brief observations about three aspects of Raul Castro's legacy, the state of human rights in the country, the state of the Cuban economy, and the crisis in Venezuela, which Miguel Diaz Canel now owns.

Raul Castro will certainly leave an enduring human rights legacy. In the last 3 years, the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, Cuba's leading independent human rights organization, documented more than 20,000 arbitrary detentions of activists. Moreover, the State Department's 2016 Human Rights Report on Cuba stated that the Cuban Government routinely denies its citizens fair trials, monitors and censors private communications, suppresses freedoms of speech, assembly and press, and employs threats, physical assault and intimidation tactics against its own people.

Raul Castro's economic legacy will be the maintenance of the dual currency system that distorts the national economy and subjugates Cuban citizens to second-class status in their own country. Foreign companies seeking opportunities in Cuba are still forced to conduct business with the military and its vast network of shell companies. "Independent entrepreneurs" are a complete misnomer, as individuals continue to operate in a byzantine system that prevents them from owning their own companies and subjects them to licensing and tax requirements designed to stifle entrepreneurial activity.

Additionally, as well-connected members of the Cuban Communist