

FBI Director Comey testified under oath that President Trump said to him, "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty." President Trump publicly railed against former Attorney General Sessions for following the guidance of Department of Justice ethics officials and recusing himself from anything pertaining to the Russia investigation. During his confirmation hearing, Barr would not commit to following the advice of career ethics officials at DOJ if they recommend that he recuse himself from the Russia investigation to avoid any appearance of conflicts of interest. Instead, he said that he would rely on his own judgment. Mr. Barr is essentially asking Senators to trust him and his judgment. Why should Senators trust his judgment when there are systems and processes in place that were created for this exact circumstance? Mr. Barr cannot call himself an institutionalist concerned with maintaining the rule of law while seemingly being unwilling to submit to the rule of law when it applies to him.

It is not surprising that the President would select as his next Attorney General someone who not only refuses to recuse himself from the investigation but also believes that elements of Mueller's probe are "fatally misconceived."

Finally, during his confirmation hearing, Barr was repeatedly pressed by Republicans and Democrats on whether or not he would agree to release the final Mueller report in its entirety. Barr would not commit to do so. I believe that the report should be made available not only to Members of Congress but to all Americans so that they can see the evidence for themselves and reach their own conclusions. If we want Americans to trust their judicial system, we must insist on transparency and honesty.

Beyond those issues, I am concerned about Mr. Barr's commitment to civil rights. During his confirmation hearing, he seemed ignorant about the disparate treatment between Whites and Blacks in our criminal justice system. When he served as Attorney General under President George W. Bush, he advocated for policies that have in turn led to mass incarceration of nonviolent offenders. In 2015, he publicly opposed the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, bipartisan legislation that would have reduced Federal mandatory minimums, and required the Bureau of Prisons to provide more rehabilitative programming to prisoners.

Last year, Congress passed the First Step Act with broad bipartisan support. The First Step Act included similar provisions to the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act. The First Step Act will not be successful without direction from the Attorney General. I intend to use my position on the Appropriations Committee to hold Barr accountable and to make sure he is proactively implementing this law.

Americans deserve to have an Attorney General who is loyal to the office

and not to the President. I do not believe Mr. Barr is that Attorney General.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I yield the floor.

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

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

VOTE ON BARR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Barr nomination?

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BARR).

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

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 45, as follows:

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[Rollcall Vote No. 24 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barraso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeven	Romney
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Inhofe	Rubio
Cassidy	Isakson	Sasse
Collins	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Jones	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Kennedy	Shelby
Cramer	Lankford	Sinema
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Manchin	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Enzi	McSally	Toomey
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—1

Burr

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOOZMAN. 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' AFFAIRS OVERSIGHT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, it is no secret that the 116th Congress got off to a rocky start as we tried to address the ongoing partial shutdown. Despite that, I remain optimistic that we can work together to get things done for the American people.

Those looking for an example of how to find common ground should look no further than the important work Congress has done, and continues to do, for our veterans. The hearing room of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee is traditionally one of the most bipartisan places in Washington. It is also one of the busiest.

Last Congress, under Chairman ISAKSON's leadership, we held 30 hearings, considered 56 pieces of legislation, and sent to the full Senate 17 of President Trump's nominees to serve our veterans.

That spirit of cooperation continued here on the floor. During the last session of Congress, the Senate passed 23 major pieces of veteran-related legislation. As a result, the President signed into law bills that significantly enhance healthcare, education, retirement, and other benefits for our veterans.

I want to talk briefly about two of the more notable measures—the VA MISSION Act and the Forever GI bill—to underscore why it is so important for Congress to operate in a collaborative manner. Bipartisan oversight of the Departments and Agencies that implement the laws we pass in that Chamber is critical to ensuring that the executive branch follows the intent of Congress. These two laws highlight just how important that is.

Let's start with the VA MISSION Act. This law was passed to replace the Veterans Choice Act, which was created in response to the VA Health Administration scandal of 2014. This was a good first step. The Choice Program addressed many shortcomings within the VA system. However, my colleagues and I quickly learned it had its own share of troubles. Specifically, we heard repeated stories of difficulties navigating the complex and confusing bureaucratic process. Despite the new reforms, many veterans were still facing unacceptably long wait times at VA medical centers.