

limited postcloture debate on sub-Cabinet positions to 8 hours and on Federal district judges to 2 hours for the 113th Congress. All of these changes took effect immediately over these 60 days.

Let me underscore what I am about to say. Republicans did not insist, in 2011, 2012, and 2013, when Barack Obama was President, that these new rules should be delayed until after the next Presidential election when there might be a Republican President. Republicans supported these changes for the benefit of this institution, even though they would immediately benefit a Democratic President and a Democratic Senate majority.

I propose that we do that again. I invite my Democratic colleagues to join me in demonstrating the same sort of bipartisan respect for the Senate as an institution that Senators Reid and McConnell—the two Senate leaders at that time—Senators SCHUMER, BARRASSO, LEVIN, McCain, Kyl, CARDIN, COLLINS, Lieberman, and I did in 2011, 2012, and 2013, when we worked to change the Senate rules the right way.

Now, 2 weeks ago, the Rules Committee gave us an opportunity to do things again in the right way by reporting to the Senate a resolution by Senator LANKFORD and Senator BLUNT, the chairman of the Rules Committee. This resolution, which is similar to the standing order that 78 Senators voted for on January 14, 2013, would reduce postcloture debate time for nominations. Remember, that is after day one, the majority leader files cloture; day two, nothing happens; day three, we have a vote on cloture that is by 51 votes, and we would reduce the time for debate on day three. District judges would be debated for 2 hours, the same as the 2013 standing order that 78 Senators voted for. Other sub-Cabinet positions would be subject to 2 hours of postcloture debate as well.

The proposal offered by Senator LANKFORD and Senator BLUNT would not reduce the postcloture debate time for Supreme Court Justices, for Cabinet members, for circuit court or certain Board nominations, like the National Labor Relations Board, but would divide the 30 hours of postcloture debate equally between Republicans and Democrats.

The Lankford-Blunt proposal would put the Senate back where it has historically been on nominations. With rare exceptions, Senate nominations have always been decided by majority vote. Let me say that again. With rare exceptions, Senate nominations have always been decided by majority vote.

President Johnson's nomination of Abe Fortas as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was the only example of a Supreme Court nominee who was blocked by requiring more than 51 votes.

There has never been, in the history of the Senate, a Cabinet nominee who was blocked by requiring more than 51 votes. There has never been, in the history of the Senate, a Federal district

judge whose nomination was blocked by requiring more than 51 votes.

Since 1949, Senate rules have allowed one Senator to insist on a cloture vote; that is, 60 votes, which requires more than a majority to end debate. Even though it was allowed, it just wasn't done. Even the vote on the acrimonious nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court was decided by a majority vote of 52 to 48. Not one Senator tried to block the nomination by requiring 60 votes on a cloture motion, even though one Senator could have done that.

Only when Democrats began, in 2003, to block President George W. Bush's nominees by insisting on a 60-vote cloture vote did that tradition change. Then, in 2017, using the Harry Reid precedent, Republicans restored the tradition of requiring a majority vote to approve all Presidential nominees, which, as I have said, has been the tradition throughout the history of the Senate.

Also, until recently, with rare exceptions, nominations have been considered promptly. After all, there are 1,200 of them, and the Senate has other things to do besides just being in the personnel business.

For example, last month, I was in Memphis for the investiture of Mark Norris, whose nomination languished for 10 months on the Senate calendar. The evening before, I had dinner with 94-year-old Harry W. Wellford. In November of 1970, Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee had recommended Harry Wellford to serve as a district court judge on the same court where Mark Norris now serves.

By December 11, 1970, 1 month later, President Nixon had nominated Harry Wellford, and the Senate had confirmed him. All this happened in 1 month. Not all nominations have moved that fast. In 1991, a Democratic Senator, using a secret hold, blocked President George H. W. Bush's nomination of me as U.S. Education Secretary. I waited on the calendar for 6 weeks. Those 6 weeks seemed like an awfully long time to me, and that was for a Cabinet position. It was not 10 months for a part-time position for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Two weeks ago, I voted to report Senator LANKFORD and Senator BLUNT's resolution to the full Senate, even though no Democrat voted for it. I will vote for it again on the floor, even if no Democrat will join us. I will also join my fellow Republicans, if we are forced to change the rules by majority vote. I do not like the Harry Reid precedent, but I like even less the debasement of the Senate's constitutional power to provide advice and consent to 1,200 Presidential nominees.

My preference is to adopt the Lankford-Blunt resolution, which is very similar to the 2013 resolution that 78 Senators voted for, and to do it in a bipartisan way, according to the written Senate rules as we did in 2013.

I believe most Democrats privately agree that the resolution offered by

Senators LANKFORD and BLUNT is reasonable, and they will be grateful that it is in place when there is a Democratic majority and one Republican Senator can block a Democratic President's nominees.

The only objection Democrats seem to have to the Lankford-Blunt resolution is that it would apply to President Trump. Their other major objection, which is truly puzzling, is that the proposed change is permanent, and the change we made in 2013 was temporary. Well, I wonder if Democrats would like it better if we made this change in the Senate temporary, only applying to the remainder of President Trump's term.

This is my invitation to my Democratic colleagues. Join me and Senators LANKFORD and BLUNT in supporting their resolution, or modifying it if you believe there is a way to improve it, and working in a bipartisan way, exactly as we did in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

A year or so ago, one of the Supreme Court Justices was asked: How do you Justices get along so well when you have such different opinions? This Justice's reply was this: We try to remember that the institution is more important than any of our opinions.

We Senators would do well to emulate the Supreme Court Justices in respecting and strengthening this institution in which we are privileged to serve. One way to do that is to join together to restore the prompt consideration of any President's 1,200 nominees and do it in a bipartisan way that shows the American people our written rules mean what they say.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. 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 ERNEST MATT HOUSE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later this week, Leadership Tri-County from Knox, Whitley, and Laurel Counties in my home State will present one of its highest honors: the Leader of the Year award. I was delighted to learn this year's title will be given to Ernest Matt House, a lifelong resident of London, KY, and a remarkable example of entrepreneurship. I would like to take a few moments today to pay tribute to Ernest Matt and his many accomplishments in Kentucky.

From an early age, Ernest Matt's talents were on full display. In high