

at the EPA. That is what I am trying to do. That is what we are trying to do.

As the President's nominee to lead this Agency, under the provisions of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, Mr. Wheeler can continue to lead the EPA as Acting Administrator until August 7 of this year. He is there, and he is going to be there. Rushing to judgment on this nomination will close the window of opportunity we have to ensure the Acting Administrator reverses course at the EPA and embraces the commonsense, bipartisan policies I just laid out—policies which make our environment cleaner and safer while they also create jobs and strengthen America's economy. I think we all want that. I think that is why people sent us here to negotiate those kind of win-win agreements.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no on this nomination so we can achieve those win-win situations that are there for the taking.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I reserve the balance of my time.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

MR. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Senate is today considering the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to serve as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is the job of the EPA to protect both the environment and human health. This critically important Agency needs Senate-confirmed leadership in place.

President Trump picked the right person to lead this Agency when he nominated Andrew Wheeler. Since April of last year, he has served as the Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and since July of last year, he has served as the Acting Administrator of the Agency. I believe Andrew Wheeler has done an outstanding job in leading the EPA over the past 7 months.

During the last administration, the EPA issued punishing regulations that would hurt the economy and raise costs on families. Under Acting Administrator Wheeler's leadership, the EPA has taken a different approach. The Agency is now putting forward proposals that both protect our environment and allow the country's economy to flourish.

Acting Administrator Wheeler has led efforts to issue commonsense regulatory proposals. These include the affordable clean energy rule and revising the definition of the waters of the United States. Both of these proposals show Mr. Wheeler is serious about clean air and clean water while they also show he understands there is an important role for States and local communities to play. It can't be a top-down, Washington-knows-best approach.

Acting Administrator Wheeler has played a critical role in implementing updates to the Toxic Substances Control Act and has taken steps to limit people's exposure to dangerous and toxic chemicals. These updates are the

result of major bipartisan legislation that came out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in 2016.

Andrew Wheeler is working to limit lead exposure as well. Last December, he helped to unveil the Trump administration's multiagency effort to reduce the number of children exposed to lead in drinking water, in consumer products, and in paint. During his tenure, the EPA has also worked to provide greater regulatory certainty to States, to Tribes, to communities, and to the industries it regulates.

Mr. Wheeler is well qualified for the position of EPA Administrator. He has spent decades—actually, over 25 years—working in environmental policy. He has served as a career employee at the EPA as an environmental protection specialist. This experience makes him uniquely qualified to serve as the head of the Agency.

After that time, he spent over a decade here on Capitol Hill. When he left the EPA, he came here to work on the Environment and Public Works Committee. He served as the staff director of the Senate Environment and Public Works' Clean Air and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee for 6 years. Then he spent another 6 years working as the Republican staff director and chief counsel for the full committee under Chairman JIM INHOFE. After his time on the Hill, he also worked as a consultant for a variety of energy and environmental clients. He is very well qualified, and that is a big reason his nomination has received broad support.

There are 63 agricultural and forestry groups that wrote a letter in support of Mr. Wheeler's nomination to be the Administrator: "It is hard to imagine a more qualified individual for the role of EPA administrator, and we respectfully request that the committee move to confirm his nomination so that he may be considered by the full Senate," they say, "at the earliest date possible."

Mr. Wheeler has received praise from the United Mine Workers of America.

Cecil Roberts, the union's international president, said the following about Mr. Wheeler: "[H]e will be a reasonable voice within the agency, and will recognize the impact on both the workers and mining communities that are directly affected as EPA develops future emissions regulations."

His experience and commitment to sound environmental policies has received recognition from the Democrats as well.

Senator CARPER, who is with me on the floor and was the ranking member of our committee at one point, said of Mr. Wheeler when he was nominated for the Deputy Administrator's role: "I think having worked in the agency, he actually cares about the environment; the air we breathe; the water we drink; the planet on which we live." I agree.

It is time to end the needless delays by the Senate Democrats. Andrew Wheeler's nomination to serve as the

Deputy Administrator was delayed for months and had to be reported out of the EPW Committee twice before he was confirmed. Now the Senate Democrats are calling to delay the process again. These delays only slow down the Agency from meeting its objectives of helping communities and protecting the environment.

The EPA needs a Senate-confirmed Administrator in office. The EPA Administrator plays a central role in developing and implementing programs that are focused on meeting the EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. Andrew Wheeler is well qualified to lead this Agency and to serve in the President's Cabinet. He is the right person to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and I strongly encourage every Senator to support the nomination.

NOMINATION OF JOHN L. RYDER

Mr. President, I also rise in support of the nomination of John L. Ryder to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the TVA.

The TVA serves 9 million people in parts of seven Southeastern States. It provides affordable electricity for business customers and local power companies, for flood control, navigation, and land management for the Tennessee River system, plus economic development for the region. The TVA is credited with transforming the region into a growing population and a growing economic base.

With over 40 years of experience as a lawyer, Mr. Ryder will be a strong complement to the TVA's Board of Directors. The Environment and Public Works Committee attested to this fact when it reported his nomination favorably to the Senate by a voice vote twice—first, on May 22, 2018, during the 115th Congress, and the next on February 5 of this year after he had to be renominated during this Congress because of the delays in the nomination approval process last year. Mr. Ryder is another example of how the confirmation process has deliberately run aground. Mr. Ryder, in normal times, would have been confirmed and in office last summer. Instead, we have to go through a cloture vote on a well-qualified nominee who has twice been reported unanimously through the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Let's not delay this any longer. I urge my colleagues to vote with me in supporting the nomination of John L. Ryder to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

BIPARTISAN BACKGROUND CHECKS BILL

MR. MURPHY. Mr. President, later today, the House of Representatives will pass a proposal that will be supported by 95, 97 percent of Americans.