

Skies Act," which was directly intended to undermine the Clean Air Act.

As a lobbyist for Murray Energy, Wheeler represented a company that didn't just knowingly violate environmental laws but consistently put its own employees' safety at risk by undermining basic protections for coal miners. He has even undermined the widely supported mercury and air toxics standards. These commonsense standards would have protected people, particularly children, from a well-known neurotoxin that impairs fetal brain development and reduces children's ability to learn.

Every single one of these actions has a direct bearing on human lives and has put people at risk. In Michigan we have witnessed firsthand the visceral and painful human costs when public leaders fail to keep our drinking water and our air quality safe. Just ask the people of Flint whom they would want to have in charge of protecting their drinking water. I can tell you it certainly is not Andrew Wheeler. The city, the State, and the EPA all contributed to the crisis that poisoned thousands of children through lead exposure, and now those children will suffer lasting consequences for the rest of their lives.

While I am proud that the Senate was able to come together to provide initial Federal funding to help Flint replace its lead pipes, the community needs continued support going forward. I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure that the people of Flint are made whole, and that included my opposing this nomination. We cannot allow the failures of leadership that led to Flint's devastating crisis ever be repeated again.

The people of Michigan and of every State deserve to know that their air is safe to breathe and their water is safe to drink. Yet communities across my State and around the country are facing another emerging drinking water crisis. This time it is from toxic fluorinated chemicals, known as PFAS, that are currently unregulated by the EPA. Rigorous testing has found that 1 out of every 10 water systems in my State has unacceptable high rates of PFAS chemicals. Families across the State have been exposed to these dangerous chemicals that have been linked to cancer, thyroid and heart problems, and even autoimmune issues. But under Wheeler's leadership, the EPA has failed to take aggressive action to list PFAS chemicals as hazardous waste and to establish strong and forcible limits to protect drinking water and to limit exposure to these toxic substances.

While I work to bring Senate action to this issue through legislation and hearings, the Wheeler-led EPA thinks action can wait. Michigan families certainly deserve better. My constituents are understandably concerned about their drinking water, and they are rightfully skeptical about who will be at the helm of the Agency charged with keeping water safe.

Since Wheeler has failed to exercise the leadership needed to address the environmental concerns we face on a national level, it is clear that he is completely unprepared to lead the Agency charged with tackling the global crisis of climate change. We must confront climate change. I have been advocating for action since before I ran for Congress. It is an issue impacting our economy, our health, our safety, and our national security. I am committed to continuing to work with my colleagues to find innovative and achievable solutions to address climate change, but we also need a leader at the EPA who can find commonsense ways to address this very serious threat, to protect our environment, and to ensure that our country can remain economically competitive. We need a leader who will fight to protect the people and the interests of my State. Given his abysmal record, it is clear that Andrew Wheeler isn't the right person for the job, and that is why I voted against his confirmation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JEAN POLLARD

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, as you know, I try to come down to the floor every week to talk about someone in my State who is making a big difference in Alaska, a big difference in their country, and a big difference in what I believe is the best State in this country. That is just my opinion. I am sure the Presiding Officer thinks his State is the best in the country, but that is why we are all here in the Senate.

Of course, Alaska is beautiful, particularly now as the snow is on the ground and the Sun is out. It is back out and high in the sky. It is also nearly time for the Iditarod—the last great race—something, I am sure, Senator MURKOWSKI and I will be talking about on the floor in the coming weeks. It kicks off this weekend.

We know it is a beautiful and amazing State, but what really makes Alaska such a great place are the people—the people who work tirelessly for causes they believe in.

Many people don't know this, but Alaska is also incredibly diverse. In fact, Anchorage—my hometown and the State's largest city—is home to the country's three most diverse census tracts, racially and in terms of nationalities. By the way, the fourth is Queens, NY.

I will just give you an example. Last week, we had this great event called Bridge Builders. It was in Anchorage. There were all of these different ethnic communities in Anchorage coming together. I spent a lot of time there on Saturday.

We are very proud of our diversity. We are proud that more than 100 languages are spoken in our schools. Think about that if you want to talk about diversity. We are proud of the foods and the cultural events. We are proud of the unique tapestry that makes up Alaska.

We are very proud of our history, and we are also blessed to have people who work diligently for all of us to keep history alive. I can think of no better way to cap off Black History Month than to recognize someone who, for years, has been fiercely determined to unearth a very important part of Alaska's history—actually, a very important part of America's history—one that transpired in my State but that greatly influenced our Nation during a very critical time.

I want to introduce you to Ms. Jean Pollard. She is our Alaskan of the Week. Jean has brought back the story of the African-American Army Engineers of the 93rd, 95th, and 97th regiments who were in the U.S. Army during World War II and stationed in Alaska during World War II.

More than 3,000 of these brave soldiers were integral in Alaska in building what we call the Alcan Highway—the Alaska-Canada Highway—one of the 20th century's greatest engineering feats.

Let me tell you about Ms. Pollard. Now a retired schoolteacher, she grew up in Georgia. When she was a teenager, her father, who was in the Army, got transferred to Alaska. Like all Alaskan students—like our good students, our pages in the Senate—she took a class on her State's history—Alaska history—in high school.

During the class, she learned about how the Army built the Alcan Highway in 1942 to help defend Alaska and America from invasion by Japan. A lot of people don't know this. Yes, Alaska was invaded and occupied by the Japanese military during World War II in the Aleutian Islands. I am going to talk about that a little bit more.

She learned about this in high school. It was a good story, but the most important element she was taught in high school was actually left out. The highway was only able to be finished because of the more than 3,000 African-American soldiers who built it.

So after getting a master's degree in education and a minor in history and after being a teacher for decades, Ms. Pollard only learned the entire story herself when she was sitting home one Friday night watching a PBS documentary about the building of this incredible highway.

What did she learn? Again, let's go back in time. It is March 1942, 3 months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. As the war effort was heating up, construction began on a 1,700-mile-long vital link connecting the great State of Alaska—it wasn't a State then; it was a territory—the lower 48 for the war effort.

Soon a massive mobilization followed—about 10,000 Army troops. Huge

trucks, civil engineers, food, tents, you name it, were deployed to start building this road.

Then, in June 1942, the Japanese invaded Attu and Kiska Islands in the Aleutian Islands chain of Alaska, adding a new sense of urgency to the completion of the road.

These soldiers worked day and night—200 bridges, 800 culverts, through some of the most rugged terrain on planet Earth, mountains, rivers, no rest, hard, backbreaking work—and they were able to complete this 1,700-mile road that still exists today—some of you may have driven it—in less than a year.

When the road was being built, the military was still segregated, and African Americans in the Army—much like in the rest of the country—were treated as second-class citizens. They were assigned to the toughest jobs on this project, using the worst equipment. In the summer, it was full of mosquitoes, black flies, mud, and swamps.

Winter comes early in Alaska. According to the historian, Lael Morgan, the winter of 1942 was considered one of the worst winters on record since 1906 in terms of how cold it was—and, trust me, it gets cold in Alaska—and how much snow there was.

The Black troops were required to build winter barracks for the White soldiers, while the African-American troops lived in tents. When the snow fell, they couldn't get supplies, and some nearly starved to death, Lael wrote. It is reported that some even succumbed to injuries due to the cold—fatalities due to the cold.

They did so much of the hard work. However, the contribution of these great African-American soldiers and heroes were completely almost scrubbed from all of the history books. Nobody that Ms. Pollard spoke to—social studies teachers or history professors—knew anything about this history.

In Ms. Pollard's words: "They stole that history." The history books wouldn't write it. It was wrong, and she knew she had to make it right so she went to work.

As a teacher herself and a lifelong learner, she knew that bringing the story to the school system was key to keeping our history alive—accurate history. Eventually, she called the historian I spoke about, Lael Morgan—a former Alaskan who was then living in Maine and happened to be featured in that documentary that Ms. Pollard watched on that Friday evening.

Lael decided to help in a big way. Incredibly, a year later, she sold her house in Maine and headed up the Alcan Highway to Alaska. Together, and with the help of a team of others Ms. Pollard recruited, they amassed enough material to give to the school system to set the history right.

Now schools across Alaska are putting this story—this real story—into their curriculum, and now she is trying to get it required as part of a course

that the university students in Alaska who are studying education have to take.

She and her team put calls out across the internet for anyone who was involved in or had a relative involved in building the highway. She was able to track down three members of the African-American Army Engineers who were still alive. She flew to interview one of the soldiers who was 100 years old. Another one, who lives in Louisiana, traveled to Alaska in 2017 for the 75th anniversary of the highway's completion.

Recently, Ms. Pollard mentioned the names of the soldiers she spoke to back then. There was a soldier from Virginia, SGT Reginald Beverly, who, unfortunately, has now passed away. The soldier in Louisiana who came to Alaska in 2017 is Private Leonard Larkins. He has 10 children. The Alaska Highway Project will be bringing him and his three sons back to Alaska on August 3 to help him celebrate his 99th birthday.

I am in the process of drafting a Senate resolution to recognize all of the members of the African-American Army Engineers who helped build the Alcan Highway, which was so critical to protecting our Nation and Alaska.

Ms. Pollard describes herself as feisty. Others might describe her as fiercely determined. When the Alaska State Legislature, at her urging, passed a resolution commemorating these African-American soldiers who built one of the greatest engineering highways in the world, she was sitting behind some of the State legislators.

She heard one whisper to another: Have you met this Jean Pollard?

The other said: Yes, she calls me several times a day about this bill.

Julie and I were just with Ms. Pollard this past weekend, as I mentioned, at the Bridge Builder event in Anchorage—my wife Julie and I. She is very passionate, very persuasive, and we are very proud of her.

Ms. Pollard and the team that created the Alaska Highway Memorial Project are on another mission to erect a memorial in a park in Anchorage. They have the design, and they certainly have the will with her driving it, and I have no doubt they will get it done to memorialize this great engineering feat by American heroes who were not treated well by their country.

Like the story of how Ms. Pollard brought important history back to our State, the story of building the Alcan and of the civil rights in the military also has an uplifting message.

On October 25, 1942, less than 8 months after they started, two soldiers, one African American and one White, shook hands after completing this highway. Six years later, President Harry S. Truman ordered the Army desegregated, 16 years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Many historians now cite the work and the experience on this Alcan Highway project, and the African-American sol-

diers and White soldiers working together on a really difficult challenge, as also helping make that possible—civil rights, 16 years later.

The Federal Highway Administration calls the Alcan Highway the road to civil rights. Isn't that a great depiction?

So, Ms. Pollard, thank you and your team for bringing that history back to us. I am proud to have talked a little bit about that important history for Alaska and America on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Congratulations for being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar Nos. 81 through 86 and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be general

Lt. Gen. Michael X. Garrett

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Timothy J. Donnellan

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 12203 and 12212:

To be brigadier general

Col. Stephen J. Mallette

IN THE NAVY

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Scott M. Brown
Capt. Casey J. Moton
Capt. Stephen R. Tedford
Capt. Eric H. Verhage

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral (lower half)

Capt. Jeffrey T. Anderson
Capt. Stephen D. Barnett