

a more streamlined process so nominees could be confirmed more efficiently.

Again, President Obama had just been inaugurated for the second time days earlier. You better believe Republicans were disappointed we had lost, but we did not throw a systematic tantrum. Instead, a sizable number of us came over and joined the Democrats to help the Senate process noncontroversial nominations, as it had for the vast bulk of the history of the Senate. I was a Republican leader in the minority, and I still supported it. We judged if it was the right thing to do, and we did it. The standing order passed 78 to 16.

So, today, I am filing cloture on a resolution that takes that bipartisan effort as its blueprint. This resolution from Senator BLUNT and Senator LANKFORD would implement very similar steps and make them a permanent part of the Senate going forward.

The Supreme Court, circuit courts, Cabinet-level executive positions, and certain independent boards and commissions would not change, but for most other nominations—for literally the hundreds of lower level nominations that every new President makes—postcloture debate time would be reduced from 30 hours to 2 hours.

This would keep the floor moving. It would facilitate more efficient consent agreements, and, most importantly, it would allow the administration—finally, 2 years into its tenure—to staff numerous important positions that remain unfilled with nominees who have been languishing.

This resolution has come up through the regular order, through the Rules Committee, and next week we will vote on it. It deserves the same kind of bipartisan vote that Senator SCHUMER and Senator Reid's proposal received back during the Obama administration.

I understand that many of my Democratic colleagues have indicated they would be all for this reform as long as it doesn't go into effect until 2021, when they obviously hope someone else might be in the White House, but they are reluctant to support it now. Give me a break. That is unfair on its face.

My Democratic colleagues were more than happy to support a similar proposal back in 2013 under President Obama. They whisper in our ears privately that they would support it now if it took effect in 2021, oh, but they can't support it now, especially under these unprecedented circumstances, simply because we have a Republican President.

Fair is fair. Members of this body should only support reforms that they would be as ready to support in the minority as they are in the majority.

Put another way, if my side is in the minority 2 years from now, I don't think this will be unfair, and it will not disadvantage us in the wake of a new Democratic President. This is a change the institution needs—a change the institution made already, basically, with a 2-year experiment when

President Obama was in office. This is reform that every Member should embrace when their party controls the White House and when it does not control the White House.

I urge every one of my colleagues: Let's get the Senate back to a normal historical pattern for handling Presidential nominations. Let's give President Trump, as well as all future Presidents, a functional process for building their administrations. Let's give the American people the government they actually elected, and let's seize this chance to do so through the bipartisan regular order that we are pursuing here, both in committee and now on the floor.

The status quo is unsustainable for the Senate and for the country. It is unfair to this President and to future Presidents of either party. It cannot stand, and it will not stand.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, will the minority leader yield for a question?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I still have the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader has the floor.

Mr. MERKLEY. Will the majority leader yield for a question?

#### IMPROVING PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF NOMINATIONS IN THE SENATE—Motion to Proceed

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to proceed to Calendar No. 24, S. Res. 50.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. Res. 50, a resolution improving procedures for the consideration of nominations in the Senate.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 24, S. Res. 50, a resolution improving procedures for the consideration of nominations in the Senate.

Mitch McConnell, Roy Blunt, Mike Crapo, Richard C. Shelby, Johnny Isakson, Lamar Alexander, Pat Roberts, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, John Hoeven, John Thune, Mike Rounds, John Boozman, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, David Perdue.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar Nos. 130 through 156 and all nominations on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed; that 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. Is there objection?

Mr. MERKLEY. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. MERKLEY. The majority leader has said he is going to put a rule change on the floor, and we are going to return to historical norm. The historical norm has been that when such issues are on the floor, amendments will be allowed.

Does the majority leader intend to allow amendments?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Oregon is propounding a question. If he would repeat it, I would appreciate it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Referring to historical norms, it has been a historical norm to allow amendments on the floor of this Chamber so that they could be debated, and I recall very well listening to you complain a great deal about Harry Reid's blocking of amendments, blocking the tree, and he did, in fact, do that as the majority leader.

Then he would negotiate with that whole set of amendments on both sides. It took some time, but there were amendments.

We have had a historic lull in amendments, and now we are proposing a rule change on how this Chamber operates. So isn't it the right thing to do, before returning to historical norm or trying to restore that sense of making this a functioning Chamber—

Mr. MCCONNELL. Is the Senator asking me a question?

Mr. MERKLEY. Yes.—to allow amendments when this comes to the floor? I am asking if he would allow such amendments.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say that we have had a number of bills that were brought to the floor open for amendment. One of the things we devolved into here, another unfortunate precedent, is Members objecting to time agreements on amendments from either side. So even if the majority leader calls up a bill and has it open for amendment, unless Members of the Senate in both parties will allow there to be time agreements so that we can actually have votes on amendments, it gets bogged down.

I think the complaint of my friend from Oregon is legitimate. I have been very frustrated by the fact that when I