

professional shortage, but the benefit comes tax-free.

I have spoken to rural communities all across my State. I know Senator DURBIN has talked across the State of Illinois. I will tell you that these bills don't simply address a matter of convenience. My fellow Tennesseans want my colleagues to know they aren't just frustrated with the long drives and unanswered questions. They are worried that their child's cough will turn into pneumonia before they are allowed a full day off from work to drive to a pediatrician. They have no idea what they would do if they were diagnosed with an illness that requires continuous care.

They do, however, know what would probably happen if someone they love suffered a heart attack or had another major emergency. They are very fearful.

If these bills pass, they will no longer have to live with the knowledge that they have been abandoned by our healthcare system. They will have access to healthcare in their communities.

I ask my colleagues to let these people know that yes, indeed, somebody is listening, and I ask them to do so by cosponsoring Senate bills 2406, 2408, and 2411.

I yield the floor.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if the Tapp nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. 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 yeas and nays are ordered.

All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Tapp nomination?

The yeas and nays were previously ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 8, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 344 Ex.]

YEAS—85

Alexander	Feinstein	Portman
Baldwin	Fischer	Reed
Barrasso	Gardner	Risch
Bennet	Graham	Roberts
Blackburn	Grassley	Romney
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rosen
Blunt	Hawley	Rounds
Boozman	Heinrich	Rubio
Braun	Hoeven	Sasse
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cantwell	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Capito	Johnson	Shaheen
Cardin	Jones	Shelby
Carper	Kaine	Sinema
Casey	Kennedy	Smith
Cassidy	King	Sullivan
Collins	Lankford	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Toomey
Cotton	McConnell	Udall
Cramer	McSally	Van Hollen
Crapo	Moran	Warner
Cruz	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Daines	Murphy	Wicker
Duckworth	Murray	Wyden
Durbin	Paul	Young
Enzi	Perdue	
Ernst	Peters	

NAYS—8

Gillibrand	Menendez	Schumer
Hirono	Merkley	Stabenow
Markey	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Isakson	Warren
Burr	Klobuchar	
Harris	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be notified of the Senate's action.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior 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 nomination of Danielle J. Hunsaker, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

John Thune, Thom Tillis, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mike Rounds, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Tom Cotton, John Cornyn, Joni Ernst, Roy Blunt, Roger F. Wicker, Jerry Moran, Mitch McConnell.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Danielle J. Hunsaker, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 75, nays 18, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 345 Ex.]

YEAS—75

Alexander	Fischer	Peters
Baldwin	Gardner	Portman
Barrasso	Graham	Risch
Bennet	Grassley	Roberts
Blackburn	Hassan	Romney
Blunt	Hawley	Rosen
Boozman	Hoeven	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Brown	Inhofe	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Carper	Jones	Scott (SC)
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Collins	King	Sinema
Coons	Lankford	Smith
Cornyn	Leahy	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lee	Thune
Cotton	Manchin	Tillis
Cramer	McConnell	Toomey
Crapo	McSally	Van Hollen
Cruz	Moran	Warner
Daines	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Enzi	Murphy	Wicker
Ernst	Paul	Wyden
Feinstein	Perdue	Young

NAYS—18

Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Cantwell	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Markey	Schumer
Duckworth	Menendez	Stabenow
Durbin	Merkley	Tester
Gillibrand	Murray	Udall

NOT VOTING—7

Booker	Isakson	Warren
Burr	Klobuchar	
Harris	Sanders	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 75, the nays are 18.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Danielle J. Hunsaker, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

HEALTHCARE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Thank you, Madam President.

This weekend, thousands of Tennesseans and, of course, millions across this Nation are going to pause and give thanks for our veterans. Quite frankly, this is something we should be doing every single day.

I am just amazed and so grateful that there are men and women, like the Presiding Officer, who have worn the uniform and who have served—brave men and women who wake up every day in some of the most dangerous places on the face of the Earth and do a job that would bring many of us to our knees. We look at this and say it is basically impossible.

When our veterans have done their part and come home, they find themselves facing another set of struggles. The challenges the veterans face are well documented, and we hear about them: long waits and long lines at VA hospitals and clinics, long recoveries from battle wounds that they have suffered, and severe emotional and mental health struggles that, if left untreated, could end in tragedy. There are systems in place to help our returning heroes. We just need to be using these correctly.

Earlier this year, the VA OIG—Office of Inspector General—released a report showing that the agency's system for keeping track of controlled prescriptions had almost entirely broken down. Think about that. We are in the middle of an opioid crisis in this country. There is a system in place, but the VA's system for keeping track of all of these prescriptions had almost entirely broken down. This is truly unacceptable.

Pretty much what is happening is this: The State-operated prescription drug monitoring program—or PDMP—contains valuable information about what drugs veterans are being prescribed outside of the VA healthcare system. VA clinicians are supposed to check this database before prescribing opioid-based and other controlled medications to make sure their patients—that patient in front of them, that veteran in front of them—are not receiving too many pills from multiple sources.

Get this. That Office of Inspector General report—the OIG report—showed that 73 percent of our VA patients who were prescribed opioids walked out of the pharmacy, medication in hand, without a VA clinician ever having performed the minimum required checks. So the system is there. It could be utilized, but what happens? The clinician gives the prescription but never checks the database in 73 percent of the cases.

This failure to follow through puts 19 percent of those patients at risk for problems with their care coordination, and almost half of those VA patients were under long-term care for chronic pain and were at a higher risk for opioid-use disorder and overdose.

We hear about these reports time and again, and we say: How in the world could this possibly happen? How could this be acceptable? It is not.

We look at how it has happened, and here is what we found out. It happened because the VA didn't make the rules clear enough.

Get this. Officials highly recommended that clinicians submit a

PDMP query, but they didn't explicitly state that it was required under existing VHA directives, and there were no national oversight controls to act as a backstop. So the rule is there, but a bureaucrat, a clinician, says: Well, they recommend it, but it is not required, so I will skirt that.

Along with their report, the OIG handed the VA a laundry list of recommendations, including directives to develop national oversight programs, better train their clinicians—that one should be an imperative—and embed accountability checks into the technology used to track patient care. VA officials have submitted now-approved corrective action plans, and we thank the VA Secretary for this. It is our job to make sure that they do follow through with this.

The lack of organization that turned VA clinics into unwitting pill pushers has made it almost impossible for veterans to seek help during times of mental and emotional distress.

In September, the VA published a report that confirmed our worst fears. As of 2017, there has been no significant change in veteran suicide rates. In 2017, the suicide rate for veterans in Tennessee hit 32.6 percent, which is significantly higher than the overall national suicide rate. It will take more than 1 day of recognition to fix this. It is going to take commitment and an all-hands-on-deck approach.

I am an original cosponsor of the Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act, which will help vets connect to the over 50,000 existing suicide prevention programs that are ready and waiting to be helpful. The bill will also give regulators a tool to measure how effective these programs are. It is a good start, but it is not enough.

Earlier this year, President Trump launched the PREVENTS Initiative, and we thank him for this attention to the needs of our veterans. PREVENTS establishes a cabinet-level task force responsible for finding the root causes of disconnect between veterans and helpful services from the VA and private organizations. Their job is to develop a strategy for Federal, State, and community leaders to engage with veterans, improve research and access to resources, and work from the ground up to prevent suicide.

Here is the caveat: This will work only if we remain in constant contact with veterans back home and use those interactions to find the cracks that veterans continue to fall through.

For years, we have listened to frustrated complaints from agency officials insisting that untangling the VA's procedural knots is an exercise in futility. Sometimes you hear: Well, it just can't be done. We do things this way because we have always done things this way. That is not necessarily true. We do them because oversight has not been exercised.

It is time for all of us—not just lawmakers and rulemakers—to finally accept that “honoring their service”—

honoring the service of these heroes—means helping these heroes heal when they need it and not leaving them at the mercy of a broken and bloated bureaucracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture votes on the Rudofsky and Wilson nominations occur at 12 noon on Wednesday, November 6. I further ask unanimous consent that the confirmation vote on the Hunsaker nomination occur at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, November 6, and that following the disposition of the Hunsaker nomination, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Nardini nomination. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on the Rudofsky, Wilson, and Nardini nominations, that the confirmation votes occur at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader on Thursday, November 7.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in 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 DAN MCDANIEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, this upcoming Veterans Day gives every American the opportunity to pause and pay tribute to the many sacrifices of those men and women who served in our Armed Forces. Out of devotion to this country and our values, these brave servicemembers made the world a safer place. It is a sincere privilege to extend my gratitude to each and every one of them.

I am especially proud to recognize the nearly 300,000 American veterans who call Kentucky home. After their military service, many of these Kentuckians came home and continued selflessly giving to their communities and our Nation. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to a special Kentucky veteran today, Dan McDaniel of Kenton County. Six days after he graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1972, Dan became one of the final draftees his community sent into the Army during the Vietnam war. Following his basic training, Dan was sent with his wife, Linda, to Augsburg, Germany, as a field artillery crewman. He