

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. For the information of all Senators, the Senate will vote on the confirmation of the Skipwith and Sullivan nominations at 11:45 a.m. tomorrow, as well as the confirmation of the Hahn nomination at 1:45 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Duly noted.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if any of the nominations listed are confirmed, the motions 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.

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. 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 JOHNNY ISAKSON

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today with my colleagues to honor my friend, the senior Senator from Georgia. At the end of this year, Senator ISAKSON will retire after 20 years of service to the people of Georgia in Washington.

After protecting our Nation in the Georgia Air National Guard, graduating from the University of Georgia, and serving as a representative in his State legislature, the door opened for a son from Atlanta to run for Congress. Georgia saw in him then what we see in him now: a principled leader, a skillful communicator, and a man worth trusting. It is no surprise that the people of Georgia have renewed their trust in him time and time again. And I know I speak for my colleagues when I say that we are grateful they did.

After six years representing Georgia's Sixth Congressional District, the Senate gained a true statesman when he entered in 2005. When I was preparing for these remarks, I came across one of his Senate reelection speeches. I thought it was particularly revealing to his character and how he carries himself in the Senate. He told the crowd that was cheering him on:

I promise you I am ready . . . I am ready to tackle whatever problem life brings to us as Americans.

With my feet rooted in conservative principles, my belief in God the Father Al-

mighty, and my belief in the people of Georgia.

Mr. President, that is who Senator ISAKSON is.

No matter the obstacles that came his way, he has always been a steady hand—strengthened by his enduring faith and deep respect for his constituents. One of those mountains to climb was working on behalf of our veterans to improve conditions at the VA and end the backlog that was building for years. Under his leadership on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I was proud to work with him to pass the CHIP-In for Vets Act into law in 2016. The bill allows local communities to take the lead on new projects by permitting the VA to accept private contributions to ensure VA projects are finished both on time and on budget. His support of this bill meant that Nebraskans have the opportunity to save millions of dollars when constructing the new Omaha VA Ambulatory Clinic. A GAO report indicates that our new facility is now \$34 million under budget and 4½ months ahead of schedule. I know generations of Nebraskans will be grateful for his help in getting this bill across the finish line.

On a more personal note, one of my fondest memories of JOHNNY was our trip to Normandy, France, this year to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day. As a veteran himself, everyone in this body understood the abounding respect and gratitude he carried for our Nation's servicemembers as he led the delegation—the same respect and gratitude he shows to our veterans everyday as he leads the Senate in providing resources to meet our veterans' needs.

Mr. President, I think if there is any moment that foreshadowed JOHNNY's service to Georgia and our Nation, it was his speech immediately after being sworn in to the House of Representatives. He turned to his new colleagues and said, "I hope, in years to come, I'll be a respected friend, and one who joined with you to make a difference in the United States of America." What a respected friend he has become. What a difference he has made. It has been a honorable journey, and it ends with us confirming that the legacy he has worked hard to achieve from the very beginning has now come true in the end.

JOHNNY, you are a great leader, a careful listener, and a gifted legislator. It has been a privilege to work with you and call you friend. You have served the State of Georgia and our country well. I wish you and Diane all the best on this next chapter in your lives. Godspeed.

#### TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT MAJOR DEREK GONDEK

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to SGM Derek Gondek for his exemplary dedication to duty and service as an Army congressional fellow and congressional budget liaison for the Assistant Secretary of

the Army, Financial Management and Comptroller. Sergeant Major Gondek is retiring after 27 years of dedicated service to his country and the U.S. Army.

A native of Lewiston, ME, Sergeant Major Gondek enlisted as an infantry soldier in July 1992, attending infantry one station unit training at Fort Benning, GA.

Sergeant Major Gondek has served in a broad range of assignments during his Army career at all levels of command. Starting as a rifleman with the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Polk, LA, Sergeant Major Gondek led soldiers as a team leader, platoon sergeant, first sergeant, and operations sergeant major across the Army. His highest level of leadership was as a battalion command sergeant major of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, HI. He has also instructed at the Army's Jumpmaster School and provided coaching to rotational units at the Army's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. Sergeant Major Gondek has served forward deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2017, Sergeant Major Gondek began his tenure with the U.S. Senate, first as a Defense fellow and next in his subsequent assignment as a congressional budget liaison for the U.S. Army. Sergeant Major Gondek worked tirelessly with Members of Congress and their staffs to accurately articulate the Army's budget positions to the Appropriations Committees. His professionalism, diligence, and commitment to the mission are unmatched, and his work both as a fellow and as a liaison very effectively represented the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense to the U.S. Congress.

The foundation of Derek's military success is his family. He is a devoted husband to his wife Maura and committed father to his daughters, Winnie, Ellie, and Zoey. Maura, Winne, Ellie and Zoey provide the foundation for Derek's service. Their attitude of service, sacrifice, and care for others permeates every organization and activity they participate in. The Gondek family is truly an example of servant leadership in the Army and the communities they engage.

Throughout his career, Sergeant Major Gondek has positively impacted soldiers, peers, and superiors. Our country has benefited tremendously from his extraordinary leadership, judgment, and passion. I join my colleagues today in honoring his dedication to our Nation and invaluable service to the U.S. Congress as an Army congressional liaison.

It has been a genuine pleasure to have worked with SGM Derek Gondek over the last 3 years. On behalf of a grateful nation, I join my colleagues today in recognizing and commending Derek for his service to our country, and we wish him all the best as he continues his service in his future endeavors.