

not only for his girls but for all other children across our State, a State that he knows and loves.

So the time was right to tackle this issue, and the time was right for another reason throughout the State. There was a more open discussion about this dark issue, this black mark on Alaska, the issue of sexual assault.

Brave women had started coming forward to tell their stories. A statewide initiative that I was part of called Choose Respect was launched over a decade ago trying to address cultural changes and then the “Me Too” movement came, and more and more people were beginning to share their stories of trauma and abuse and to have the courage to do it—because it takes courage.

Kyle not only captured many of those voices, he also began to dig into the larger issues of generational trauma and an issue that is so important in our State, the lack of law enforcement in many of these places, in so many small villages across Alaska. He did it all the while by capturing the complexities of a multitiered public safety system in Alaska. Working with ProPublica, he traveled throughout the State, dug through reams of documents, talked to dozens and dozens of survivors, perpetrators, police officers, lawyers, you name it.

Let me try to capture the breadth and depth and heartache of his 17-part series told by just a few headlines. These are some of the headlines of the stories in the Anchorage Daily News: one, “Discussing Alaska’s history of sexual violence is one step toward seeking solutions;” another headline, “Lawless: One in three Alaska villages have no local police;” another headline, “Dozens of convicted criminals have been hired as cops in rural Alaska. Sometimes, they’re the only applicants;” another headline: “She leapt from a van on the Kenai Peninsula to escape her rapist. Then she waited 18 years for an arrest.” You get the picture.

Let me summarize the opening to one of the stories, a first-person piece headlined, “Why we’re investigating sexual violence in Alaska,” and it tells Alaskans why this series is delving into this very, very difficult topic. It is a story—a horrible story—of a very young girl in one of our villages who vanished from the playground, found later sexually abused, murdered, and it rips your heart out.

These are the kinds of stories that I have certainly heard about and tried to address in my time in public service in Alaska. These are the stories that haunt us as Alaskans. They have haunted countless Alaskans: of course, survivors, victims, their families, leaders, good citizens, good people. They are difficult and shocking stories to tell, but they need to be told, they must be told, and that is what Kyle Hopkins did, and that is why he earned the Pulitzer Prize. These are the kinds of stories that Attorney General Barr

confronted when he came to Alaska last May, his first trip to any State in the country after he was confirmed as our new Attorney General.

Before his confirmation hearing, Senator MURKOWSKI and I had both invited him to come to Alaska. We talked to him in detail about these challenges, and then we did something that I think mattered, and, again, it gives a sense of why this series was so important. We started sending the Attorney General some of Kyle Hopkins’ stories of this 17-part series, the ones that he had written at this time.

So the Attorney General knew before he even got here some of the challenges because of this reporting. Attorney General Barr actually came to our State for almost 5 days—a long visit—to hear from survivors, law enforcement, lawyers, meeting dozens of Alaskans throughout the State who have worked on these issues—some without a voice, without help from the Federal Government, many Tribal members. It was a really important trip.

He was given a beautiful kuspuk as a gift, and when he left, he took a piece of Alaska with him in his heart. I am convinced of that. As a matter of fact, I talked to him about Alaska yesterday on the phone and this very series. He still wears the kuspuk, by the way. He says it makes him look trim.

Shortly after returning to DC, he began to focus with the Department of Justice on some of these big issues, declaring a public safety emergency in rural Alaska and starting to free up significant resources to improve public safety in our State’s rural communities.

So the funding helps, and it is already being put to good use, but this is a story not just about money. As a matter of fact, that is not even the important issue. The important issue is culture. We desperately need a cultural change on these issues in Alaska that have been going on for way too long, and that is another reason why Kyle’s work is so important, because you can’t change the culture if you don’t know how broken it is.

Will it work? Does he think things will change? “I wouldn’t presume to know,” he said, when my team caught up with him on Tuesday, a day after the Pulitzer Prize was announced, already hard at work on another story, by the way.

“I hope things change,” he said. “That’s one of the goals of the series . . . But if nothing changes, at least people will know about the injustice in our system . . . and if it’s going to continue, if we’re going to allow this to continue, it should be with our knowledge.” That is his quote.

“This is my place,” Kyle added, talking about Alaska. “It’s an awesome place and I don’t want to live anywhere else. But things are wrong. And it shouldn’t be for the next generation, for my girls and other girls. If there’s something we can do about it, we should do it.” That is his quote.

And of course, he is right. We should do it, and many of us in Alaska—really, thousands of us in Alaska—are committed to this cause and have been committed to the cause for a long time. I believe Kyle’s work is going to help a lot in that regard.

I want to thank the Anchorage Daily News for supporting this series, to all the staff who worked on the series, to the owners, the Binkleys. Thanks to the Pulitzer committee for recognizing the importance of this series, and thank you, Kyle, for your hard work and determination.

Congratulations, again, on winning the Pulitzer Prize, and probably even more prestigious than winning the Pulitzer Prize for the United States, congratulations on being our Alaskan of the Week.

I yield the floor.

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## EXECUTIVE SESSION

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### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of all nominations on the Secretary’s desk for the Coast Guard, that the nominations be confirmed, and motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

#### NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY’S DESK

##### ON THE COAST GUARD

\*PN1379 COAST GUARD nominations (257) beginning JASON A. ACUNA, and ending DAVID J. ZWIRBLIS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 6, 2020.

\*PN1571 COAST GUARD nominations (10) beginning JENNIFER J. CONKLIN, and ending GENARO A. RUOCCO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 13, 2020.

\*PN1572 COAST GUARD nominations (160) beginning RYAN G. ANGELO, and ending JEFFREY S. ZAMARIN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 13, 2020.

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### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of PN1709 and the Senate proceed to consideration of that nomination.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The bill clerk read the nomination of Brett P. Giroir, of Texas, to be Representative of the United States on the Executive Board of the World Health Organization.