

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for 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.

CONFIRMATION OF JOHN L. RATCLIFFE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to the confirmation of Congressman JOHN RATCLIFFE to be Director of National Intelligence.

I voted against JOHN RATCLIFFE for Director of National Intelligence for three key reasons.

First, I do not believe Congressman RATCLIFFE is qualified for the position of Director of National Intelligence, DNI.

By law, a DNI requires "extensive national security expertise." Past DNIs have been career civil servants or military officers with extensive experience in intelligence and foreign affairs.

By contrast, Congressman RATCLIFFE has been a member of Congress for 4 years and the mayor of a small town in Texas. His sole intelligence community experience is a single year on the House Intelligence Committee.

I am deeply concerned that during his hearings he was unable to demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the most pressing threats and challenges that we face as a nation.

Second, I am very concerned with Congressman RATCLIFFE's position on torture.

During his nomination hearing, he refused to denounce torture. He refused to admit that certain CIA actions following 9/11 were torture. And he refused to agree that waterboarding is torture, regardless of potential changes to U.S. law.

Torture is morally reprehensible, and the head of our intelligence community must be willing to say so and prevent it from happening again.

Third, the DNI must not be politically motivated. The DNI directs 17 intelligence agencies with a budget of more than \$60 billion and is responsible for providing objective intelligence analysis to the President.

Congressman RATCLIFFE is a vocal defender of President Trump and served on his impeachment defense team. I am concerned that politics would interfere in his duties if he were confirmed.

We need a confirmed DNI with the right experience and objectivity to do the job.

Congressman RATCLIFFE was nominated for this position last year and subsequently withdrew. Nothing has changed since then to qualify him for this role.

NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS WEEK

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I am pleased that earlier this week the Senate passed S. Res. 586, a bipartisan resolution designating this week National Public Works Week. National Public Works Week celebrates the profound impact our public works professionals have on our safety and quality of life. Public works are the shared assets that make up the backbone of our Nation. Public service professionals build, manage and operate our nation's most essential services.

Many of us take for granted work that goes into the services we rely on every day. This week provides an opportunity to reflect on the men and women behind those services. Let us consider the way our daily life is powered by public service professionals: We wake up in the morning to turn the tap on and expect water to come out. We place our trash bins on the street and expect it is collected in timely manner. Some of us may drive over bridges built to last generations and follow traffic signals that were carefully planned to keep us safe.

The work of public service professionals has a tangible impact on our lives every single day. Consider the employee who replaced the aging pipe that brings water to your home or the scientist that ensured that water is safe to drink. Consider also the sanitation worker who keeps your street clean and healthy. We can also think of the engineer who designed the bridge and the construction worker who started the workday before dawn to ensure the construction minimally impacted your routine. National Public Works Week gives us a formal opportunity to humanize these services and say thank you to the people working behind the scenes to keep our communities running.

There is no more important time than now to recognize these individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our communities in ways previously unimaginable. However, we can count on public works employees to rise to the occasion. Public works employees are often on the frontlines, risking their own health to ensure that services are delivered. While much of public life has come to a standstill, the rhythm of public services continues. Water mains break and require repair and garbage must still be collected.

The pandemic has thrust millions of Americans into financial uncertainty, unsure how they will pay for basic services. Many public works agencies, like the Baltimore Department of Public Works are continuing to offer discounted water rates as the pandemic continues.

Public works also offer hope for our Nation's economic recovery. From the Great Depression came a formative era in the history of public works in America. President Franklin D. Roosevelt understood the power of transformative projects to jumpstart America's economy and provide a higher

quality life than previously known. The New Deal made an indelible impact on the structure of our government and trajectory of America's financial recovery. The projects themselves now stand as a physical representation of our young Nation's capacity to overcome adversity with ingenuity and grit.

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our Nation is profound. However, our Nation is ripe for investment in public works projects that will put people back to work and stimulate our economy, as was done with the New Deal. As the ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, I understand the urgent need to address our Nation's aging infrastructure. That is why I am proud that the Committee reported favorably, on a bipartisan basis, a surface transportation reauthorization bill last year, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act, S. 2303, which authorizes billions of dollars to State and local governments to invest in roads, bridges, and highways, and why I hope my colleagues in the Senate will come together and follow through with important infrastructure legislation. There is no better time than now to invest in our Nation's infrastructure and employ a new class of public works professionals. Public works are central to the American story of resiliency and fortitude, even in the face of despair. This week, and always, we should look to public works professionals with gratitude for their contributions to our lives.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Memorial Day commemorations will be different this year. The coronavirus may force us to continue Memorial Day traditions virtually or privately with our families. Nevertheless, it is important for us to take time this weekend to honor those who bravely gave their lives for all of us.

Throughout our Nation's history, courageous and patriotic men and women have gone into battle and lost their lives to protect the freedoms that make being a U.S. citizen such a blessing. I am proud that Mississippians throughout our history have readily committed to serving our Nation. Likewise, we are equally committed to honoring the fallen and their families.

It was Mississippians who helped initiate the solemn act of commemorating those lost in battle. Columbus, Mississippi, proudly claims rights to originating Decoration Day, when women began decorating the graves of the all casualties not long after the Civil War.

This year, despite all precautions we must take, there are ways we can remember and honor the fallen. For my part, I honor the brave Mississippians who have dedicated their lives to protecting our citizens, and I pray for the

families who share in their sacred sacrifice.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today, in honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. Every year, throughout the month of May, the people of the United States join together to pay tribute to the contributions and achievements of generations of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, AAPI, who have enriched the history, culture, and traditions of this country.

Today, there are approximately 23,000,000 AAPIs in the United States, representing more than 45 distinct ethnic groups and speaking over 100 language dialects. As the fastest growing minority population, the AAPI community continues to have an increasing impact on our national discourse. There are now 20 AAPI members of Congress, and a record number of AAPIs are serving in State and Territorial legislatures across the Nation.

This year, as we celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month amid a pandemic, we recognize the over 2,000,000 AAPIS working on the frontlines as healthcare professionals, first responders, transit operators, and in supermarkets and other essential service industries. Every day, these heroic individuals risk their lives to protect the health and safety of Americans during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

We also reflect broadly on the achievements and contributions of the AAPI community in the areas of politics and government, education and the arts, music, writing and literature, sports, business, medicine, and law. We pay tribute to the leaders before us, who overcame great adversity and paved the way forward.

We honor great statesmen like Daniel Kahikina Akaka, the first person of Native Hawaiian ancestry to serve in the U.S. Senate. Throughout his nearly four decades in Congress, Senator Akaka worked to change the public's perception of the AAPI community and helped to preserve and restore Hawaiian language, culture, and traditions. Although he recently passed away, Senator Akaka's spirit as a true champion of aloha endures.

We also remember influential labor organizers like Larry Itliong, Peter Velasco, and Philip Vera Cruz, who in 1965, led the Filipino-American farmworkers to strike alongside Cesar Chavez, demanding better pay, benefits, and working conditions. The Delano Grape Strike was one of the most pivotal civil rights and labor movements in American history. It opened doors for immigrants and people of color and inspired countless others to stand together and demand their rights.

Around the time that the Filipino-American grape workers began their strike in 1965, Congress enacted the Im-

migration and Nationality Act, INA, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. This landmark legislation overturned discriminatory race- and nationality-based immigration policies that previously barred immigration from Asia. The INA established new policies based on reuniting families and attracting skilled professionals and helped refugees fleeing violence or unrest, notably those escaping war-torn Southeast Asia. By opening the United States to immigration from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the INA's enduring legacy includes diversifying the demographic makeup of our country.

This month, I introduced a resolution in honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. While we commemorate the contributions of the AAPI community, this pandemic has tested the strength of our nation. Anti-Asian racism and attacks are on the rise, stoked by those in the highest levels of government. This recent surge in discrimination and hate crimes against the AAPI community demonstrates how much work must still be done to achieve full equality. As a country of immigrants, we must now, more than ever, embrace the rich diversity of our communities, and stand up for the civil rights and equal treatment of all Americans.

CONFIRMATIONS OF DAVID A. WRIGHT AND CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, today, the Senate confirmed the nominations of David Wright and Christopher Hanson to serve as Commissioners on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, NRC. While I am pleased that these nominees will provide the NRC with a full Commission, I remain deeply concerned with Mr. Wright's history of strongly supporting efforts to move the Yucca Mountain repository forward and oppose his confirmation today.

Shortly after Mr. Wright joined the Commission in 2018, the State of Nevada called for Mr. Wright to recuse himself from matters pertaining to Yucca Mountain licensing. He refused. Mr. Wright is on the record calling for the "expeditious implementation of the Yucca Mountain program" and founded the Yucca Mountain Task Force. His refusal to recuse himself denies Nevada its right to an unbiased Commissioner on the NRC and furthers the distrust that plagues the Nation's management of nuclear waste.

More than 30 years ago, Nevada was thrown into the center of the nuclear waste debate, when Congress dismissed the siting process it established in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 and named Yucca Mountain the sole nuclear waste repository for the Nation over the strong objections of Nevadans. The site is physically unsuitable and puts at risk the safety, security, and economic well-being of the State. The decision broke the trust of the Amer-

ican people in the government's ability to responsibly manage nuclear waste. The reappointment of Mr. Wright to the NRC does nothing to regain the trust of Nevadans or establish confidence in nuclear waste repository licensing processes.

Commissioners serving on the independent agency must be neutral and unbiased in order to ensure confidence in the guidance, regulations, and determinations issued by the NRC. Mr. Wright can make the decision to recuse himself from Yucca Mountain licensing matters, and it is my hope that he will chose to do so to bring integrity to the Commission and to restore the rights of the State of Nevada.

I also acknowledge the importance of Mr. Hanson being confirmed to the NRC today. He will help bring balance to the Commission with his decades of experience on nuclear energy and waste issues.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to ensure Congress continues to utilize its authority to oversee the work of the Commission and hope all Commissioners will approach all matters, including those that pertain to Yucca Mountain licensing, without preexisting bias and conflicts of interest.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, today the Senate passes my annual resolution to designate May 5 as National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls, for the fifth year in a row. We hope to continue drawing attention to this crisis as we work together to find a solution.

I would also like to commend the work that the Trump administration has done to address this crisis. In particular, they have established the Lady Justice Program at the Department of the Interior and issued a proclamation on November 26, 2019, to sustain public attention on this ongoing and important situation.●

TRIBUTE TO WILLIE K

• Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, with the passing of Willie K, Hawaii has lost a music legend. Through his raw talent and unmatched musicianship, Willie K blazed a trail that redefined music in Hawaii and across the country.

Born William Kahaialii—and known affectionately as "Uncle Willie" throughout our State—Willie K wouldn't be tied down to any single genre or instrument. Instead, he did it all. Willie could play or sing almost anything.

Willie's love for music came from his family. Raised in a family of musicians in Lahaina, Willie started performing at just 8 years old. Taught by his father and renowned guitarist, Manu