

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew Kozma, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. 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 nomination of Executive Calendar No. 282, Matthew Kozma, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security.

John Thune, Markwayne Mullin, Ted Budd, Tom Cotton, Mike Crapo, James E. Risch, Joni Ernst, Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Rounds, Bernie Moreno, Kevin Cramer, Roger Marshall, Tommy Tuberville, Jim Banks, John Boozman, John Barrasso, John Hoeven.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume Executive Calendar No. 273.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that if any nominations are confirmed during today's session of the Senate, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Wright and Matthews nominations be waived.

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

Mr. THUNE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF DAVID WRIGHT

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today in support of David Wright's nomination to serve as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Right now, we stand at a critical junction to ensure that our Nation has the ability to provide reliable and affordable power for our constituents, our onshore American manufacturing, and also to win the AI race. Nuclear energy

is absolutely central to achieving these goals.

Fifty years ago, Congress established the NRC to recognize the foundational principle of having a credible, independent nuclear safety regulator. Since then, the NRC has seen major periods of change, from responding to our most significant nuclear accident to preparing for a nuclear renaissance that did not fully materialize.

Through this time, the NRC has evolved on how it functions, but far too frequently, these functions have been inefficient, time-consuming, expensive, and have not allowed our nuclear innovators and the American people to fully realize the benefits of nuclear power.

That is why, last year, Congress passed the ADVANCE Act with overwhelming, bipartisan support to make the NRC's functions more efficient, predictable, and affordable. That was my bill.

Now the Commission must ambitiously implement this legislation. Additionally, President Trump has tasked the NRC with implementing his Executive order to further reduce the licensing timelines and shed unnecessary regulations.

This is a challenge that the Commission must meet, and we expect the NRC to deliver. Achieving this will require experienced and highly qualified Commissioners who are empowered to lead the Agency through a period of high expectations. Well, David Wright meets that mark.

Chairman Wright was first confirmed as an NRC commissioner in 2018, reconfirmed by the Senate for a full 5-year term in 2020, and has served as President Trump's Chairman through the end of that term in June when his term expired.

Throughout his 7 years on the Commission, Chairman Wright has demonstrated his vision to make the NRC a modern, risk-informed regulator. He supported policies that streamlined requirements to advance novel technologies that will help clean up contaminated, abandoned uranium sites as well as policies that create the groundwork for fusion energy.

He led this effort to extend the duration of certain licenses to provide long-term regulatory certainty, and Chairman Wright has instilled accountability with the NRC staff by directing the Agency to focus on issues most important for nuclear safety.

In January, as required by the ADVANCE Act, the Commission updated its mission statement for the first time in a generation. Chairman Wright worked with his colleagues to revise the mission statement which reads:

The NRC protects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.

I support this revised mission statement as it aligns with what Congress

intended by passing the ADVANCE Act. It is now time for the Commission to put this new mission statement into action as the law requires—and Congress and President Trump expects—to the benefit of our Nation.

David Wright will help make this mission a reality, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in voting for his reconfirmation to the NRC.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

GAZA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I think many watching the Senate from afar and even those of us privileged to serve in this body see us as simply talking past one another on a far too regular basis. So I want to start today remembering some wise words from my friend and former Senate colleague the Republican Senator from Nebraska and later Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel.

Chuck was an internationalist and knew the dangers, personalities, and difficult tradeoffs when dealing with overseas challenges. Several years ago, he said quite wisely:

Powerful nations must be the adults in world affairs. Anything less will result in disastrous, useless, preventable global conflict.

I couldn't agree with Senator Hagel more, and I want our Israeli allies to think carefully about his words when it comes to the horror of Gaza.

Quite simply, the humanitarian conditions in Gaza are appalling, unconscionable, and cruel. Last week, more than 100 NGOs—including Mercy Corps, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, and Oxfam—warned of mass starvation spreading across Gaza. Following Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's nearly 3-month blockade of humanitarian assistance, three-quarters of the population in Gaza is facing emergency or catastrophic levels of hunger. The tiniest of babies cannot even access formula and risk heart-breaking death.

Yes, Hamas started this conflict with a heinous attack on Israel. Yes, Hamas is still unconscionably holding hostages. And yes, Hamas cynically uses civilians as human shields and brutally represses brave Gazans who are protesting for an end of this despicable rule. But, as I have repeatedly appealed to Israel, learn from our mistakes in the United States after September 11, after the attack on our country and the loss of 3,000 innocent Americans. Be careful of decisions made in the fog of rage, pain, and loss. Recognize there is no solely military solution to defeating a terrorist group.

In fact, last September, the Israeli Defense Forces assessed that Hamas had been largely defeated militarily and that today, Hamas is effectively, in the words of the Israeli military, a guerrilla terror group.

Israel should have been planning how to restore order and thinking about a day-after plan in Gaza long ago when

Hamas's military capabilities had largely been destroyed. Several noted Israeli leaders tried, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Director of the Israeli Security Agency Ronen Bar—both of whom were fired by Netanyahu.

Let me be clear. Continuing this war with no discernible end is not in Israel's national security interest, and a lack of a viable plan and the humanitarian fiasco have been glaring mistakes—getting worse by the day.

Last week, Senators REED, SHAHEEN, WARNER, COONS, SCHATZ, and I called for a drastic change of course in Gaza, including an end to the fighting, return of the hostages, a dramatic increase in humanitarian aid, and a viable path toward a two-state solution that brings in regional powers to help manage and rebuild Gaza.

You cannot watch these scenes on television of these children emaciated because of their starvation and other children begging with pans for just a little bit of food to survive and believe this is the right course of action. It has to end. The humanitarian aid has to start immediately. It is within Israel's capabilities to do that. There is no excuse if they don't.

There was some welcome news this weekend about reopened aid corridors, but the larger urgent steps just can't wait any longer. I know the dilemma. I believe I know the dilemma that Israel faces with the attacks on October 7 on Israelis. I saw the videotape. Hamas was outrageous in their conduct in this invasion of Israel. But it has reached a point now where Israel has to show some leadership.

I don't know what Prime Minister Netanyahu is waiting for, but if he witnessed what we do in the United States from organizations across the world begging us to do something, to join them in stopping this humanitarian disaster, perhaps his heart will soften somewhat. We have to, in the United States, show real leadership.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of David Wright, of South Carolina, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2030. (Reappointment).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF DAVID WRIGHT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am here to speak to the nomination of David Wright to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and to express my opposition. Not only will I be casting my vote against the nomination of Mr. Wright, but I truly urge all of my colleagues, Republican and Democrat alike, to do the same, at least until things settle down at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

At his hearing, I had intended to vote for Mr. Wright and to support a speedy confirmation through the Senate. But things started going haywire at the NRC. Mr. Wright has the qualifications to serve on that Agency and assured us that he wanted to bring expertise, competence, and independence to the Agency—or I should say, protect the expertise, competence, and independence of that Agency.

The background here is that Congress created the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to be an independent Agency to regulate nuclear facilities and materials. And when Congress did that, we deliberately separated it from the Department of Energy, and we have protected, for years, that as an important firewall.

Well, where are we now? The DOGE boys and the Department of Energy are infiltrating the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, compromising its integrity, its competence, and its mission. If you support expanding America's nuclear energy, this situation should alarm you. Even now, right now as I speak here, conditions aren't getting better at the NRC. After we pointed this out, they are still deteriorating.

While Mr. Wright committed to Congress that he would promote NRC's full authority and retain qualified staff and fulfill the Agency's commitment to the safe use of nuclear energy, that is not what we are seeing. What we are seeing is a DOGE-DOE detailee who has entered the top ranks over at the Agency without any Nuclear Regulatory Commission supervision. He is just planted over there, reporting to who knows who but, presumably, the Energy Secretary who is supposed to be on the other side of that firewall.

This DOGE-DOE detailee has been up to some bad business over there. He has been pushing out the Agency's top experts. Expertise in nuclear science and nuclear safety is a pretty precious commodity. People who worked there for years—for decades—are being shoved out. He has been pursuing reductions in force when, at this moment, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission needs more staff and help than ever.

And he has been pulling tricks like sidelining the general counsel over there to put her out of the equation—she, who must be approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission—and slip in a DOGE- and Department of Energy-driven, so-called chief counsel who the NRC hasn't approved and doesn't have to approve.

So the way we set it up was the Commission would pick its counsel, would have to approve it. And that person is being sidelined—the woman is being sidelined—so this other character can come in a slightly different role that doesn't require the approval of the Commission and just elbow her out. This guy is a fossil fuel lawyer. He doesn't know anything about nuclear energy except that it competes with fossil fuel. There is no good reason for that shift and a lot of bad reasons.

So my suspicions are up. All of this interference is threatening the NRC's independence and credibility at a time when the NRC's independence and credibility matters so much as we try to meet our unprecedented new demand for nuclear power.

I say this as a longtime champion of nuclear reform. I have been the top Democrat—the lead Democrat—on all of the nuclear reform bills that we have passed. It started with the Innovation Act with Senator CRAPO. We went on to the Innovation and Modernization Act with Senator BARRASSO and, most recently, the ADVANCE Act with Senator CAPITO.

I have put a fair amount of my credibility on the line because I believe that there is a new renaissance possible with nuclear power because of the small modular reactors and the safety components that can be done when you are building the same thing repeatedly and can test and test for safety; and the next-gen nuclear power that can be far safer than the older stuff and, if done right, could even burn through the nuclear waste stockpile, for which we have no other use, to provide a value power, clean power out of what is now a liability—nuclear waste.

We really do have a huge opportunity in this industry. The industry is responding. People are hiring. People are going back to school. This is really happening, and I want it to happen. I want it to succeed.

So it is really dumb for the Trump administration to be recklessly interfering with the NRC right now. It ought to be as offensive to Senator CAPITO, Senator CRAPO, Senator BARRASSO as it is to me. Supporting America's nuclear industry has been a bipartisan project, and it is working. The NRC has moved. It has changed. These new projects are moving forward, the small modulars and the next gen. Things are happening over there.

It is not like they have fouled it up and now deserve to be taken over by DOGE characters—who don't know anything about nuclear power—and by the Department of Energy. We are busting a thing that is working by doing this, and it doesn't seem to be a sensible plan other than the Department of Energy would like something else to run, even though they are supposed to be a firewall, and the DOGE people want stuff to wreck. But the DOE wanting something to run and DOGE wanting something to wreck is not a justification.

So to send a signal, I will be voting against Mr. Wright. And if—if, if—we could get a few votes to actually stop this nomination—not for long; just long enough to send a signal to the Department of Energy: Hands off the NRC; you are not supposed to cross that firewall, and the NRC itself: Hey, wake up; stand up and get those DOGE folks out of your shop, and to the nuclear industry, a burgeoning industry right now: Hey, defend the regulator upon whose credibility you depend,