

and against innocent civilians in countries around the world, including the 2004 attack on commuter trains in Madrid, Spain and the 2005 bombings of the mass transit system in London, England;

Whereas, following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the United States, under President George W. Bush, led an international coalition into Afghanistan to dismantle al Qaeda, deny them a safe haven in Afghanistan and ungoverned areas along the Pakistani border, and bring Osama bin Laden to justice;

Whereas President Barack Obama in 2009 committed additional forces and resources to efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan as “the central front in our enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism”;

Whereas the valiant members of the United States Armed Forces have courageously and vigorously pursued al Qaeda and its affiliates in Afghanistan and around the world;

Whereas the anonymous, unsung heroes of the intelligence community have pursued al Qaeda and affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the world with tremendous dedication, sacrifice, and professionalism;

Whereas the close collaboration between the Armed Forces and the intelligence community prompted the Director of National Intelligence, General James Clapper, to state, “Never have I seen a more remarkable example of focused integration, seamless collaboration, and sheer professional magnificence as was demonstrated by the Intelligence Community in the ultimate demise of Osama bin Laden.”;

Whereas, while the death of Osama bin Laden represents a significant blow to the al Qaeda organization and its affiliates and to terrorist organizations around the world, terrorism remains a critical threat to United States national security; and

Whereas President Obama said, “For over two decades, bin Laden has been al Qaeda’s leader and symbol, and has continued to plot attacks against our country and our friends and allies. The death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our Nation’s effort to defeat al Qaeda.”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) declares that the death of Osama bin Laden represents a measure of justice and relief for the families and friends of the nearly 3,000 men and women who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, the men and women in the United States and around the world who have been killed by other al Qaeda-sponsored attacks, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the intelligence community who have sacrificed their lives pursuing Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda;

(2) commends the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the United States intelligence community for the tremendous commitment, perseverance, professionalism, and sacrifice they displayed in bringing Osama bin Laden to justice;

(3) commends the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the United States intelligence community for committing themselves to defeating, disrupting, and dismantling al Qaeda;

(4) commends the President for ordering the successful operations to locate and eliminate Osama bin Laden; and

(5) reaffirms its commitment to disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al Qaeda and affiliated organizations around the world that threaten United States national security, eliminating a safe haven for terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and bringing terrorists to justice.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the preamble is agreed to and the motions to recon-

sider are considered made and laid upon the table.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF JOHN J. MCCONNELL

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today in support of the nomination of John “Jack” McConnell to serve as a district court judge in the State of Rhode Island. We have heard and we will hear a number of very strong statements about this nomination. I would argue very vociferously that many assertions that have been made are inaccurate at best and they are not shared by the legal and business community in Rhode Island. In fact, Jack McConnell is supported publicly and enthusiastically by the two former Republican attorneys general of Rhode Island, Arlene Violet and Jeffrey Pine. He is not opposed by the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce, which knows him and has worked with him. He is supported by our legal community and our business community. He has received the strong endorsement of our leading newspaper, the Providence Journal, which has a record of moderation, indeed if not conservatism, in terms of their judgments about judicial candidates and some issues, but certainly moderation.

Later, Senator WHITEHOUSE and I will respond specifically about the assertions and concerns, but I think it is time at this juncture to make a few brief points about where we are at this Senate. We are at a point where we might be crossing a bridge from which we cannot return; that, unlike our previous history, district judges will be subject routinely to cloture motions because one faction or another decides, not on the merits but procedurally, they should not go forward.

Let me make a few points. Senator WHITEHOUSE and I recommended Mr. McConnell to the President after publicly seeking applicants, talking to attorneys throughout our State, interviewing almost every single applicant. We took this decision seriously, as you would expect. We know it is a reflection both upon ourselves and upon our State. From this pool of applicants we selected Mr. McConnell because we

found him to be among the best attorneys of the State, a pillar of our community, one of the most generous philanthropists in our State—and in most cases anonymously—and in many cases not simply writing a check but standing in a soup line early in the morning handing out food to people who need it, without acclaim, without fanfare. This is the character of the individual, and character, I think, ultimately is the test of a judge. He has a true desire to serve this country.

Indeed, Mr. McConnell has practiced law for decades. He has never been subject to an ethics claim, a malpractice claim, a rule 11 motion, and most importantly he has never had a motion for sanctions filed against him concerning his conduct in any litigation in which he has been involved. He has a spotless record.

Moreover, we selected Mr. McConnell because we knew, based upon all of his personal background, his sworn testimony, that he will follow the precedents of the law and of the First Circuit Court of Appeals and of the United States Supreme Court. This is not something we take lightly and it is not something Mr. McConnell takes lightly. We know and he knows that when you step upon the bench you assume huge responsibilities. You have to not only appear to be impartial, you have to in every word and deed go the extra mile to demonstrate that impartiality, that you are not favoring anyone. He is prepared to do that. In fact, I think that is part and parcel of the nature of this gentleman.

Now, we have to stop here and ask ourselves collectively, do we want to go ahead and take this step of cloture for district court nominees? Do we really want to add another front in the battle of partisan political “gotcha”? Do they really want to cast aside, for example, the blue slip process which allows Senators from a home State, particularly with a district judge, to say yea or nay? It is a process that has been in the Senate, in the informal culture of the Senate for years and years. Do they want to deny a nominee who has been reported out of committee on a bipartisan vote three times, not once, an up-or-down vote? I heard and I have heard for years—particularly under President Bush—many people coming to this floor and claiming everyone who is nominated and comes out of committee deserves an up-or-down vote, particularly a district court nominee, especially a district court nominee. So this is where we are poised—to reject all of them, to enter a new dimension of controversy and conflict in the Senate.

We have a long history in the Senate of precedents and tradition when it comes to nominations, particularly district court nominations. In my State, my predecessors, men such as John Chafee and Claiborne Pell and Lincoln Chafee and John Pastore, clearly adhered to those standards. And we have a record—a strong record