

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. 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 bill 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Michael L. Connor, of New Mexico, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

Harry Reid, Sherrod Brown, Richard J. Durbin, Robert Menendez, Christopher A. Coons, Angus S. King, Jr., Martin Heinrich, Amy Klobuchar, Dianne Feinstein, Tom Udall, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Bernard Sanders, Barbara Boxer, Brian Schatz, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Benjamin L. Cardin, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SARAH BLOOM RASKIN TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 457.

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 assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Sarah Bloom Raskin, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. 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 bill 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Sarah Bloom Raskin, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

Harry Reid, Tim Johnson (SD), Barbara Boxer, Mark Begich, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tom Udall (NM), Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Bernard Sanders, Mazie K. Hirono, Christopher A. Coons, Jon Tester, Brian Schatz, Martin Heinrich, Claire McCaskill, Heidi Heitkamp, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JESSICA GARFOLA WRIGHT TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 356.

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 assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jessica Garfola Wright, of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion.

The bill 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jessica Garfola Wright, of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Harry Reid, Carl Levin, Barbara Boxer, Mark Begich, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tom Udall (NM), Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Bernard Sanders, Mazie K. Hirono, Jon Tester, Martin Heinrich, Brian Schatz, Claire McCaskill, Heidi Heitkamp, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF RICHARD J. ENGLER TO BE A MEMBER OF THE CHEMICAL SAFETY AND HAZARD INVESTIGATION BOARD

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 189.

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 assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Richard J. Engler, of New Jersey, to be a Member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Richard J. Engler, of New Jersey, to be a Member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.

Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Mark Begich, Richard Blumenthal, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tom Udall (NM), Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Bernard Sanders, Claire McCaskill, Patrick J. Leahy, Mazie K. Hirono, Jon Tester, Martin Heinrich, Brian Schatz, Heidi Heitkamp, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed to morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. REID. It is my understanding that Senator SESSIONS tonight wants to speak for up to 30 minutes. So everybody would be limited to 10 minutes each, except for him.

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

HOMETOWN HEROES SURVIVORS BENEFITS ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I am proud to recognize the 10th anniversary of the enactment of the "Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act" which occurred this past Saturday. Back in 2003, I worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to pass this legislation to improve the Department of Justice's Public Safety Officers' Benefits—PSOB—program by allowing families of public safety officers who suffer fatal heart attacks or strokes to qualify for Federal survivor benefits. I am proud to mark the 10-year anniversary of this important program.

I first want to thank each of our Nation's brave law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical responders for the work they do for the

American public each and every day. This legislation, like the Public Safety Officers Benefits program, is for them. It is Congress' recognition of the importance of their service to their communities and to the Nation.

Our public safety officers are often the first to respond to a crime scene or emergency situation. They are often the first line of defense in a natural disaster or national security emergency. They are among our most courageous and dedicated public servants. I applaud their efforts in responding to more than 240 million emergency calls each year—whether those calls involve a fire, crime, medical emergency, natural disaster, or act of terrorism—without hesitation. They act with a steadfast commitment to the safety and protection of their fellow citizens and, sadly, sometimes lose their own lives in the protection of their communities.

Each year, hundreds of public safety officers nationwide lose their lives and thousands more are injured while performing their duties. And while these benefits can never be a substitute for the loss of a loved one, the families of all these fallen heroes deserve this financial support from the Federal government.

The PSOB program was established in 1976 to authorize a one-time financial payment to the eligible survivors of Federal, State, and local public safety officers who die in the line of duty. While there had been various efforts over the years to improve the program leading up to 2003, the benefits did not extend to officers suffering a fatal heart attack or stroke from a work-related, non-traumatic injury, such as stress or strain from the job.

The Hometown Heroes Act of 2003 expanded PSOB coverage to ensure that the survivors of public safety officers who die of heart attacks or strokes in the line of duty or within 24 hours of a triggering effect while on duty—regardless of whether a traumatic injury is present at the time of the heart attack or stroke—are eligible to receive financial benefits. Ensuring public safety is dangerous, grueling, and stressful work. A first responder's chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke exponentially increases when he or she puts on heavy equipment and rushes into a burning building or gets into a shootout with dangerous criminals. Since enactment of the Hometown Heroes law, the Department of Justice has approved 373 claims. This is 373 families who have received this important support in the face of a tragedy. The families of these brave public servants deserve coverage under the PSOB program and I am grateful that Congress was able to pass legislation to make sure the law covered these situations.

Over the past few years I have increasingly sought ways to improve the

PSOB program. Last year, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, I was successful in adding to that legislation the Dale Long Act. The inclusion of this amendment fixed coverage gaps in the Federal PSOB program by extending benefits to private, non-emergency medical services—EMS—volunteers and personnel. In Vermont alone, this change covers an estimated 1,200 EMS personnel for the program. This legislation also streamlined what had been an unwieldy and unnecessarily long appeals process for claimants, clarified the list of eligible survivor recipients, and eliminated an artificial distinction under current law to include vascular ruptures as a type of injury that would make a public safety officer's survivors qualified for Hometown Heroes benefits. Since 2012, as a result of the Dale Long Act's enactment, an additional 23 Hometown Heroes cases have been approved.

Finally, I want to recognize the outstanding work of Director Denise O'Donnell and her staff at the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Under Director O'Donnell's leadership, her dedicated staff has put into place significant reforms and improvements to the program that have increased efficiency, transparency, and communication with the survivors of fallen first responders with pending claims. They are putting to good use the new statutory provisions that were enacted as part of the Dale Long Act provisions that make the program more cost effective and easier for administrators and claimants to find resolution. As a former prosecutor, Director O'Donnell understands the importance of this program to first responders across the country and she has worked very hard to listen to their concerns and act on them. I know the staff members within the PSOB program office recognize the solemnity and importance of the work they do and recognize that each case represents a family that has endured a great sacrifice. They carry out their duties with the respect these cases deserve and I thank them as they continue to carry out the promise Congress made to America's first responders over 30 years ago.

Public safety officers are part of the bedrock of our Nation. We must continue to recognize their hard work and selfless dedication to communities across this country and ensure that they and their families have the protections they need and most certainly deserve.

JAMES NOMINATION

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the process for running these nominees through the Senate is unnecessary and contrived simply to ignore a number of Republican concerns.

I do not oppose all the nominees, however. I wish to strongly support the

confirmation of Deborah James for Secretary of the U.S. Air Force. With three Air Force installations in Oklahoma—Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Altus Air Force Base, and Vance Air Force Base in Enid—the Air Force has long been a part of the fabric of the State of Oklahoma. Oklahoma is home to five major military installations between the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army. They employ thousands of Oklahomans and contract work throughout the State being responsible for a tremendous role in Oklahoma's economy. These installations enjoy the strong support of the communities in which they are located and the entire State of Oklahoma.

The Senate Armed Services Committee held a nomination hearing on Ms. James back in September. In addition, I have met with Ms. James, and I have had an opportunity to discuss with her my concerns about this unprecedented period in which the readiness and capabilities of the Air Force are at significant risk because of budget cuts and sequestration.

For example, the Air Force was forced to ground one-third of its combat coded active squadrons for a time during fiscal year 2013 and according to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force it will now cost a minimum of 10 percent more flying hours to fully retrain the grounded squadrons than it would have to simply keep them trained all along. Further, General Welsh stated that sequestration in fiscal year 2014 could force flying hours to be cut by 15 percent and within 3 to 4 months, many units would be unable to fly at rates required to maintain mission readiness.

Ms. James has over 30 years of senior homeland and national security management, policy, and program experience in government and the private sector. She served with SAIC in McLean, VA from 2002 as the president of SAIC Technical and Engineering Sector, executive vice president for communications and government affairs, and senior vice president for Homeland Security. Prior to those positions, she served as vice president for International Operations and Marketing at United Technologies from 1998 to 2000.

She served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs from 1993 to 1998, overseeing all matters pertaining to the National Guard and Reserve Forces. She has significant experience working with Congress, as a former professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee from 1983 to 1993. She has a bachelor's degree in comparative studies from Duke University and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University.

I believe she is very qualified and ready to start her new role. I look forward to working with Secretary James