

Science is critically important to agriculture, and this is another Federal agency that depends on good science.

Given the serious challenges facing America's farmers and our food system—from pollinator declines, to deteriorating soil health, to a changing climate—USDA's science mission is extremely important. As someone whose home State university has a vibrant department of agriculture, as someone who knows the very broad range of Federal funding for USDA that supports agriculture-related scientific research—the USDA is critical in helping provide our farmers with the information they need to improve plant and animal resilience, to be more effective stewards of the land, and to adopt new technologies and practices on their farms. This could all be at risk if the agency's head of science has no relevant scientific training and even rejects current scientific thinking.

I believe that science, not mere opinion or partisan attitude, should underpin our decisions when it comes to our Nation's agricultural policy.

It is my hope that the administration will now go back and recommend a nominee who is scientifically trained and who cares deeply about the role of science in our Nation's agriculture.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 409, 410, 411, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 429, and 431.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Peter Henry Barlerin, of Colorado, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Cameroon; Kathleen M. Fitzpatrick, of the District of Columbia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste; Michael James Dodman, of New York, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign

Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; Michele Jeanne Sison, of Maryland, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Haiti; Jamie McCourt, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the French Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Monaco; Richard Duke Buchan III, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Spain, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Andorra; Larry Edward Andre, Jr., of Texas, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Djibouti; Thomas L. Carter, of South Carolina, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization; Nina Maria Fite, of Pennsylvania, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Angola; Daniel L. Foote, of New York, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia; Kenneth Ian Juster, of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of India; W. Robert Kohorst, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia; Edward T. McMullen, Jr., of South Carolina, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Swiss Confederation, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Liechtenstein; David Dale Reimer, of Ohio, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mauritius, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraor-

dinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Seychelles; Eric P. Whitaker, of Illinois, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Niger; Carla Sands, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Denmark; Michael T. Evanoff, of Arkansas, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Diplomatic Security); and Manisha Singh, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic and Business Affairs).

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Barlerin, Fitzpatrick, Dodman, Sison, McCourt, Buchan, Andre, Carter, Fite, Foote, Juster, Kohorst, McMullen, Reimer, Whitaker, Sands, Evanoff, and Singh nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 361.

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

The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Steven E. Winberg, of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy).

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Winberg nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 295, 296, 323, 324, and 325.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Paul Dabbar, of New York, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy; Mark Wesley Menezes, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Energy; Richard Glick, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2022; Kevin J. McIntyre, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2018; and Kevin J. McIntyre, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2023.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Dabbar, Menezes, Glick, McIntyre, and McIntyre nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 378, 380, and 385.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Kyle Fortson, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2019; Gerald W. Fauth, of Virginia, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2020; and Linda A. Puchala, of Maryland, to be a Member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2018.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc

with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Fortson, Fauth, and Puchala nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 107, Steven Engel.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Steven Andrew Engel, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Steven Andrew Engel, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Lindsey Graham, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, John Thune, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 384, Peter Robb.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of Peter B. Robb, of Vermont, to be Gen-

eral Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board for a term of four years.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Peter B. Robb, of Vermont, to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board for a term of four years.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Thom Tillis, Lindsey Graham, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, John Thune, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 407, William Wehrum.

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 bill clerk read the nomination of William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, John Barrasso, Johnny Isakson, Chuck Grassley, Lindsey Graham, Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, John Thune, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Mike Rounds, James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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